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A MILLIONAIRE'S COUSIN

E. LAWLESS



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NEW YORK

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(*Leisure Hour Series.*)

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"I speak of Africa and golden joys."

—HENRY IV., v., iii.

The millionaire's cousin, Mr. Adolphus Bell, tells this story; it is only a simple love tale, with a few not very complicated misunderstandings; the scene is laid in Algiers, where John Hargrove, the millionaire, had taken a fancy to build himself a villa. It is crisply written, and gives an attractive picture of life in Algiers. By the author of "A Chelsea householder."



NEW YORK

HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

1885

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

MY ARRIVAL 1

CHAPTER II.

I AM INTRODUCED TO THE BONSON FAMILY . . 25

CHAPTER III.

DÉJEUNER A LA FOURCHETTE 43

CHAPTER IV.

I GO FOR A VERY EARLY WALK 67

CHAPTER V.

HARGRAVE MAKES A PROPOSAL 93

CHAPTER VI.

WE START FOR THE ATLAS MOUNTAINS . . . 119

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CHAPTER VII.

AFRICAN SNOW, AND ITS EFFECTS UPON THE TEMPER . 142

CHAPTER VIII.

WE RETURN FROM THE ATLAS MOUNTAINS . . 163

CHAPTER IX.

MOONLIGHT AT THE CHÂTEAU D'OC . . . 178

CHAPTER X.

SIX MONTHS AFTER 190

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A MILLIONAIRE'S COUSIN.

CHAPTER I.

MY ARRIVAL.

I, ADOLPHUS BELL, am a painter, and the first of my family that has taken to the arts as a vocation. Like many artists whose means are more modest than their ambitions, I share a studio with others in the same predicament. Now the comfort of such an arrangement depends, it will be obvious, largely, if not entirely, upon the amount of equality and good fellowship which prevails between the several members of the party, any tendency to domination on the part of one being naturally fatal to such equality. At present our party consists of three, and two of us—Simcox and myself—are decidedly overridden and overmatched by the third, whose circumstances

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have given him a certain perfectly adventitious preponderance of which he is not slow to take advantage.

Brown Judkins is a big, red, burly-mannered young man, with about as much feeling for art, in my humble opinion, as an average coal-heaver. Having had the advantage, however, of a year's training in Paris and another at Brussels, he has a certain slap-dash way of producing his effects, knocking off so many yards as it were of paint and canvas—which to my feeling is little, if any thing, short of impertinent. Thanks also to this same early familiarity, he can dilate at large upon foreign capitals—their gayeties and galleries, the respective beauty of their women—subjects upon which neither Simcox nor myself can pretend to give an opinion, the former's acquaintanceship with the continent of Europe being limited to a fortnight spent in extreme youth upon the sands of Boulogne, while my own past history has not, unfortunately, been embellished by even so distant and meager an experience as this. Now, as no one naturally likes to be set at naught upon such purely frivolous and

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adventitious grounds as these, it has for a very long time back been a fixed idea in my mind that I would seize upon the very earliest opportunity which presented itself of shaking off this insular reproach, and putting myself upon a level with Brown Judkins in this respect. That being the case, my satisfaction may easily be imagined upon receiving one morning about the middle of last February a letter from my cousin, John Hargrave, inviting me to spend some weeks with him in his villa at Algiers.

John Hargrave and myself may be said to stand at exactly opposite ends of the monetary scale, my fixed income being accurately represented by a naught, his by the same naught many times repeated, with a handsome figure at one end to give it weight and consistence. The Hargraves are all rich, whereas none of the Bells have ever, I regret to say, possessed a groat in their lives. The late Sir Benjamin Hargrave (he was knighted upon the occasion of some, I have forgotten what, civic function) was a full-blown, pompous-looking individual, with a massive gold chain and a bunch of dangling watch-seals, which the conformation

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of his person seemed always to bring into prominent relief. When I was a very little boy he had a way, I remember, of chucking me under the chin, and telling me to hold up my head and not be afraid, which even in those youthful days filled me with vague rage and confusion. The Hargraves' house was in Portman Square, and a very magnificent affair it was, with an amount of gold leaf upon its walls and its ceilings which otherwise distributed would have sufficed for a good many minor diadems. In those days wealth had not learned to disguise itself under quaint and strange devices, and my great-uncle Hargrave (he was my mother's uncle) certainly showed his in a sufficiently *naïve* and outspoken fashion. As I advanced to man's estate I used now and then to be bidden to entertainments, at which my lot generally was to stand in a doorway and watch the variegated throngs streaming beneath the many-twinkling candelabra. Poor relations have, however—perhaps unwarrantably—their own opinions, and it was no small consolation to me, I remember, to mentally smile at these redundant splendors, and turn up my nose (of

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course quite invisibly!) at what, to my youthful and fastidious mind, seemed the somewhat barbaric character of my great-uncle Hargrave's entertainments.

I speak in the past tense, for these glories have of late departed, or at all events been under temporary eclipse, since the death of their former and their reversion to their present proprietor.

John Hargrave, my cousin, is a man of a totally different type from his father. He wears no gold chains, or if he does they are not obtrusively evident. Since his accession to the family accumulations the house in Portman Square has been shut up, he having no turn for the sort of aldermanic pomp for which its halls were formerly renowned. John is now forty-five, and has therefore been about the world for a pretty considerable time. He has never married, nor has he apparently seen any necessity for so doing; neither has he any profession, unless that distant and very discreet supervision which he exercises over the paternal brewery (I forgot, by the way, to mention that the Hargraves are brewers) can be account-

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ed such. Nothing, however, could be a greater error than to look upon John as an idle man, on the contrary, few have ever exhibited more energy in their own line than he has done. He has sat in the House of Commons for two contested boroughs, and has contested unsuccessfully twice as many more. As a committee man and chairman of companies, his praise has been in many men's mouths. Brooklands, his place in Herefordshire, is always cited as a model to other and less practical-minded landlords, while as regards charities his munificence has been of the kind never described by any epithet less striking than *princely*. Even his very amusements have not been devoid of the same spirit. His yacht, the *Go By*, is one of the largest, I am told, afloat, and as a pioneer into strange and little frequented seas he has added fresh luster to the character of the roving Englishman. The last two winters, however, he has established himself at Algiers, remaining there with a constancy not a little at variance with his previous habits. Reports, vague but enticing, had from time to time reached me of the beauty and more than ori-

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ental luxury of this abode, chiefly through the medium of certain Society journals, for which Simcox subscribes, and from which he occasionally reads extracts with much gusto and satisfaction. All these combined causes made it, as will readily be understood, a decided satisfaction to be able to announce at the studio one morning, with due indifference, that I had accepted an invitation to spend some weeks with my cousin at his North African paradise.

I had lately disposed of a couple of pictures, which, taken in connection with the fact that John had intimated in his letter that my reliance upon his hospitality was to date from the moment of leaving my own doorstep, placed the monetary aspect of the matter upon an altogether satisfactory footing. Three days, therefore, after the receipt of my cousin's letter, I was seated in a first-class carriage, bound for the city of Paris.

Over the emotions which visited me as I walked for the first time under the gilded ceilings of the Louvre and over the historic asphalte, I draw a veil, the more willingly that

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they are probably not of transcendent novelty. Over other sensations, endured during a day and two nights' transit across the boisterous waters of the Mediterranean, I likewise—for different reasons—draw a veil. Suffice it to say that there was one moment, some thirty hours or so after my embarkation, when, having been wakened from an uneasy slumber by the violent banging of the berth-board above my head, I did ask myself, as I sat erect in my narrow crib, and looked despairingly about me in the darkness, whether even for the sake of bringing back portfolios full of "naked Arabs and sunlit mosques," whether even for the sake of flaunting Africa and its golden joys in the very face of the reluctant Judkins, it was worth enduring such a combination and complication of miseries as those through which I was at that moment passing.

These debatings, however, vanished with the sensations which gave them birth. And when some six or seven hours later I was again awakened by a sudden thumping at my door, it was to find, to my no small relief, that the hideous and heathenish pitchings and heavings which

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had made the last two days a martyrdom to endure and a nightmare to look back upon were at an end; that the engines themselves were panting feebly and intermittently, like some exhausted athlete whose course is run; that, in short, we were entering the harbor, and that another half hour would see us at our anchorage.

Like every one else on board, I hastily bundled on my clothes, and clutching together my scattered possessions, was soon on deck. The sun had not yet reached the rim of the horizon, and the whole air was filled with a pale violet haze, which struck me at once as the most beautiful and the most un-English thing I had ever seen in the whole course of my life. We were passing through a crowd of boats, large and small, which nearly blocked our passage. Behind and to the right and left of us, stretched the two long gray arms of the harbor, into whose embraces we had just thrust ourselves; while in front, over an advanced guard of prosaic-looking shops and warehouses, rose, tier above tier, a town—a vision rather—a dream of white houses, rising precipice-fash-

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ion, or falling cataract-fashion, over the slope, their white walls divided from one another by no intervening roofs, the violet mist filling every cleft and cranny, and causing the whole to seem, as it were, floating upward toward the small crowning citadel or fort above, rising against a sky solemn with the yet unredeemed promises of the morning.

I had been at first so hurried, and afterward so miserable, that it literally seemed to me as if it was not until that minute that I fairly realized that I was at last aboard. A sort of screen or dead wall—I know not how otherwise to describe it—behind which I had hitherto lived, seemed at that moment to fall down, and all this new tide of loveliness to come rushing in at me over the ruins. Before, however, I had fairly time to catalogue these new sensations we had reached our moorings, and were already surrounded by a vociferous crowd of boatmen drowning by their discordant clamor the more distant sounds of the yet only half-awakened town. While I was still contemplating this new invasion, anxiously trying to make up my mind which boat to select wherein to convey

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myself and my possessions, divided between delight at the picturesqueness of the bare-legged, brown-chested crew, and alarm at the extremely crazy and unseaworthy aspect of their crafts, another boat, rowed in a different fashion, and manned by four men whose faces, though sunburned, were unmistakably English, approached the ship. The man in charge mounted to the deck, and having glanced doubtfully around, appealed to one of the officers of the ship; upon which I discovered, to my no small surprise, that my own insignificant self was the object of which they were in search. Two minutes more and I was over the side and in the boat; another, and we were speeding rapidly over the narrow intervening space of sea; five minutes more, and I stood at last upon the shores of Africa!

A slight, and in my case evidently perfunctory, interview with the custom-house officers being at an end, I adjourned outside, where a carriage, drawn by a pair of prancing bays and driven by a resplendent being in livery, was awaiting me. Into this I stepped with as much of an indifferent, matter-of-course air as was

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attainable under the circumstances; and we drove off, first through a jostling crowd of natives, hot, dirty, excited, vociferous; then through a couple of broader streets, where turbaned Orientals and French soldiers, priests in black, and negresses in orange and scarlet, jostled one another promiscuously. After that, up and up along white roads lined at intervals with tall trees, or shut in between white walls overhung with broad-leaved and dazzling-hued creepers; the view of the mountains, at first concealed, growing in beauty and distinctness with every yard we advanced.

As we approached our destination, my thoughts, hitherto concentrated upon this new and, to me, highly remarkable world into which I found myself suddenly translated, began insensibly reverting to the man whose guest I was now to be. John Hargrave is sixteen years older than myself, and is therefore, apart from other considerations, entitled to a certain measure of respect and deference at my hands. A man less chargeable with ostentation or moneyed aggressiveness breathes not, I sincerely believe, upon the face of this earth;

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nevertheless, even while cordially recognizing that fact, I never somehow can help a certain mental reference to those same money-bags of his in my intercourse with this really quite unnecessarily and ridiculously wealthy cousin of mine. Is it owing to some ignoble streak in myself, or why should wealth—an accident of which fate, or an untoward investment, might at any moment deprive him—weigh upon me like this, I have often wondered. When I meet John casually, or when he comes strolling into the studio and sits down to discuss the affairs of the day, I am conscious for the moment of no such disparity; rather—for though a well-informed man, he is distinctly the reverse of a genius—I at times feel a certain inward superiority outbalancing that of years. Why, then, should the mere fact of my being his guest—the temporary sharer and spectator of his splendors—have so unnecessary an effect, I have more than once asked myself with some impatience.

One excuse or one reason at all events for the phenomenon is perhaps to be found in a certain solidity, or—if that is too harsh a word—a

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sort of Olympian calm and imperturbability which is not the least valuable of my cousin's many possessions. His very good-nature—which amounts in the family to a proverb—has something superhuman about it, which puts it beyond the range of any thing to which other and less happily circumstanced mortals can attain. It is true that his youngest sister, Mrs. Atherton, who, for a Hargrave, is herself rather a frivolous and light-minded person, has often declared that John's temper is *not* that perfect thing which we and all the world suppose it to be; that on the contrary he *has* a temper of his own, and can be as nasty as any body else when he chooses; but then, as no one beside herself has ever pretended to perceive any corroboration of this, the assertion has always passed as a piece of flippant and somewhat impertinent sisterly extravagance.

Meantime we had been mounting higher and higher, and had just entered a sort of narrow cutting or small defile between red sandstone rocks which for the moment cut off all view on either side. Emerging from this we found ourselves confronted with a fresh expanse of sea

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and plain and far-off snow-capped mountains. Then, having paused for a moment to have a gate opened, we passed, still upward, through a double line of feathery-looking acacias, toward a house crowning the summit, and seeming to rise like some colossal flower out of the mass of encompassing greenery. Before I had time to take in more than a general view of this new phenomenon, an authoritative voice, issuing apparently out of the middle of a palm tree, was heard calling to us to stop. I turned, and there, spud in hand, stood John, clad from head to foot in virgin white, but otherwise just as solid, just as British, just as identically the same square-jawed, red-whiskered, imperturbable-looking John as when we parted last in London.

"There you are! I hope those fellows had the boat in time for you!" he said, advancing. "Had a good crossing?"

"Well, middling," I answered hesitatingly; "not sorry to find myself on dry land again at any rate," I added with a confident air and the would-be jovial tone of the seasoned mariner ashore.

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"Ah, I dare say not. Come along in. There's coffee waiting for you in your room."

I was hurried through a hall or court, where I was vaguely conscious of a great many round-topped arches and a good deal of white marble and arabesques, and presently found myself in an inner room, long and narrow, the sunlight streaming in through a sort of variegated lattice, and forming roseate pools of color upon the floor and furniture. Here hot coffee and rolls were found waiting upon a mother-of-pearl topped table, and with a matter-of-fact hope upon John's part that I should find myself moderately comfortable, I was left to realize the situation.

When I rejoined him he was standing at his hall-door, and proposed that I should accompany him for a stroll round the grounds, a proposal to which I naturally assented. He had adopted the foreign custom, he told me, of a midday breakfast, but long before the arrival of that festivity he had already done me most of the honors of his dominion. His enthusiasm on the subject was really edifying. He took me up and down his slopes, displaying all his

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woods and plantations, his eucalyptuses—a dozen good species at least, he assured me, not to speak of other and more doubtful varieties —his cypresses, and cassias, and Aleppo pines, his robinias, aralias, and heaven knows what all, telling me all their scientific names with a rapidity and a precision which literally took my breath away. Never before had I seen John so animated, so voluble, so little like his usual stolid self. "You should have seen the place when I took it, my dear fellow," he repeated to me more than once. "A wilderness—a perfect wilderness, I pledge you my honor. Up there"—pointing with his spud to a sort of terrace laid out with orange-trees— "all that was weeds; the Arab fellow kept his cows upon it. And there"—pointing to the view of the mountains—"a great wall ran for keeping his wives in; and there"—turning the spud in the direction of the town—"another wall for keeping his neighbors out. I had to clear the whole thing away right from the very foundations, and then put those shrubs and things back again as you see them."

I listened and listened, and admired and

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admired, but still, all the time, through my soul there ran a strong vein of bewilderment. Was this John? I asked myself: my well-known, my long-familiar cousin John?—or had some other and totally different being taken possession of that stalwart frame? When I had staid before with him in Herefordshire he had never displayed any of this absorbing interest in trees and shrubs and the minutiæ of landscape-gardening, being content to leave such details to the care of the functionaries paid for their maintenance. Why, then, should the mere change of scene and clime work such a miracle? I inly wondered. It was the same in the garden—if so prosaic a word, chiefly to my mind suggestive of cabbages and gooseberry-bushes, can be applied to scenes like these—bowers over whose perfections Kubla Khan, or Haroun-al-Raschid himself, in his palmiest days, might have sighed or grown faint with envy. Geraniums, not grown in petty slips and dotted about over the surface of a flower-bed, as in our paltry fashion at home, but expanding into bushes large as a moderate-sized laurustinus, and covering some

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half-acre or so with their blooming profusion ; bignonias, blazing like meteors up the walls ; roses, trailing hither and thither from branch to branch, or rising like miniature trees upon the terrace—"And only planted last February!" Hargrave exclaimed in his pride. But why attempt to describe the indescribable ? Suffice it to say, that every thing which bounteous Nature, assisted by an almost perfect climate, and ministered to by an almost boundless pocket, could produce, or be persuaded to grow, was there ; and there, too, in a perfection, a luxuriance, which, even to my uninstructed eyes, spoke volumes of the care and tendance, the ceaseless watering, pruning, shading, comforting, lavished upon their well-being. Still, odd as it may seem, I was not somehow satisfied. It seemed to me as if there must be something else—as yet unexplained—in the background ; some attraction more potent than roses, more potent even than bignonias and eucalyptuses, to account for the transformation. Of course, if Hargrave had been a mere dilettante, or an artist like myself, or a man in whom the beautiful outweighed every thing else, why,

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then no further explanation would be needed. But he was not, as I have already tried to explain, that sort of man at all—at least to my knowledge he had never been so hitherto. Utility—not beauty—had up till now been the guiding-star of his existence. What induced him, then, to leave all his usual practical pursuits, his boards and his committees, his benevolent associations, and all his hundred and one other avocations, to come and play the landscape-gardener upon the slopes of Mustapha?

Breakfast-time came before any light had begun to dawn upon my perplexities, or before John had half come to an end of his dissertations upon the rival *pros* and *cons* of Algerian horticulture. This meal was served in the principal hall or court, where we sat in state under the shade of a huge red and white silk awning, waited upon by noiseless menials, and lulled by the drip of fern-fringed fountains, and where, if we did not recline upon cushioned couches, we at all events might have done so had we chosen. How far it was my imagination or not I can not say, but it certainly did seem to me as if Hargrave himself felt con-

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scious of being just a little out of place among his own gorgeous surroundings. John is a remarkably good-looking fellow, tall, straight, and broad-shouldered, and carrying his two score and a quarter of summers as lightly as if they had been but one. His good looks, however, are essentially of a British, I might almost say of a Philistine type. He is the least given to picturesqueness, the least of a *poseur* of any man I have ever come across. What possessed him then, I said to myself, to surround himself with possessions which savored of nothing so much as the wild and wayward luxuriance of some Eastern despot, and seemed only to require a band of Ethiopian slaves, or a bevy of fair-haired Circassians, in order to make the whole thing complete?

We dined early, not in the same room in which we had breakfasted, but in a smaller one running parallel to that which had been assigned to me as a bedroom. It had formed part of the suite allotted to the harem, John informed me, which accounted doubtless for the bars—ornamental, but still highly effective—which crossed and recrossed the windows.

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Later in the evening, as we were strolling about the garden, he pointed out a well or *luria* down which tradition told that a Christian slave girl had been thrown, for some infraction, it was said, of the harem discipline—a want possibly of appreciation of her turbaned lord. Beautiful as the whole place was, it had an odd indefinable atmosphere of mystery and bygone wickedness about it which impressed me curiously. I felt as if some invisible taint from the past must be resting still upon its grass and flowers, some brand of treachery, some deed of blood done within its snow-white walls—and even John's pre-eminently practical, not to say prosaic conversation was powerless to dissipate the fancy.

A full moon was rising when, late that night, I passed through the central court on my way to my own bedroom, a lamp which depended between two of the columns paling, but not effectually interfering with this softer radiance. Half an hour later, when a servant had removed this obstruction, I looked out again and found the whole place gleaming like some sort of submarine cave in the full effulgence, shafts

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of silver seeming to wind and writhe themselves serpent-fashion up the twisted columns, leaving the arches above in profoundest shadow. The thing was astonishingly beautiful, and I stood leaning against my door-post and staring at it with all my eyes. Could it be only five days ago, I thought, since I left London—since I was pounding about in the slush and mud of Bayswater, since Simcox and I were looking for painting materials and purchasing herrings for our tea? Tired as I was, and longing to be asleep, I could not tear myself away from the spot, but stood leaning there against the door-post, half undressed, breathless, fascinated. Even after I had gone to bed I lay awake a long time listening to the splash of the fountain and the distant hollow drumming of the frogs; and when at last I fell asleep I dreamed that John Hargrave and myself were wandering about through the halls of Eblis, along corridors hung with great white strings of pearls, each pearl as large as a good-sized strawberry, and that just as I was upon the point of putting one of these into my mouth it exploded with a bang, like the bang which had awakened me the

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night before on board ship ; from which ridiculous imaginings I awoke to find the moonlight still lingering upon the upper flutings of the pillars, one great quivering shaft striking right across the tesselated pavement of the court, and dropping a pale silvery finger-tip among the water-lilies and tall green papyrus in the tank beneath my window.

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CHAPTER II.

I AM INTRODUCED TO THE BONSON FAMILY.

AFTER this night of calm and moonlight, there followed a morning of cloud and violent gusts of wind, sweeping wildly over the orange trees, and tearing the big leaves of the bananas in the court to ribbons. As I stood dressing at the window, watching the water pouring cataract-fashion over the marble, and the waves leaping in the bay below, I inly congratulated myself upon being once more safe upon sober mother earth, out of reach of those more frolicsomely disposed elements which were keeping holiday outside.

Toward midday the sun, however, suddenly emerged with that dazzling brilliancy with which it is in the habit of rewarding its Algerian votaries, and Hargrave proposed a walk. Accordingly we sallied out, first along the approach to the house, down each side of which

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the water was still racing in torrents; then along a path through a wood filled with lanky eucalyptuses until we came to the high road up which I had driven the previous morning.

The Château d'Oc—so Hargrave's villa was called—being one of the highest in Algiers, this part of our walk was consequently all down hill. I can not say that the nearer scenery struck me on that occasion as particularly attractive. French villas, pretentious and self-conscious-looking, preponderated largely over the original Moorish constructions; smells very much the reverse of balmy, had been brought into sudden prominence by the recent rain; the way was hot, the footpath crowded.

"Here, come in this way," Hargrave said suddenly. "There are some people here, friends of mine, whom I should like to introduce to you."

We passed through a scrubby little garden, consisting chiefly of long, brown weeds and stunted, spiky-looking shrubs like corkscrews, and presently came in front of a small and decidedly shabby-looking Arab house—shabby,

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that is, upon the northern or entrance side, which was that which I saw first, but upon the further side, where the sun was now shining fiercely, all dilapidations were concealed by a magnificent garment of crimson blossom covering the whole front like a cloak, and mingling with the long yellow sprays of a Banksian rose —at least I believe it was a Banksian rose— which tossed its sweetness upward and downward in dainty golden profusion. For my part, I must own that I neither saw the roses nor any thing else at the first glance; for halfway up the wall was pierced with a large square aperture or *loggia*—I know not what the proper Arab term for it may be—protected with a well-worn wooden balustrade, and over this balustrade leaned a young lady engaged in snipping away the redundant leaves with a formidable-looking pair of shears. This young lady wore some sort of flat, broad-brimmed cap of soft, flexible material upon her head, and her face was turned directly toward us, and that face I quickly decided was one of the most striking I had ever seen in the whole course of my life. Whatever else may be said for Moorish archi-

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tecture, it at least has the superlative merit of being the most becoming background possible —a fact which was stamped vividly upon my mind from that moment. Indeed, what with the white house and its crimson covering; what with the blue sky and the yellow roses; what with the delicate blending of the lines, the audacious contrasts of the colors, the whole seeming to find its climax and completion in the figure of the young lady with the shears, the entire effect struck me as the most perfectly brilliant thing I had yet seen even in this country of brilliant effects.

Meanwhile the object of my admiration had become aware of our vicinity, and had laid aside her shears.

"How do you do, Mr. Hargrave?" she said, looking down at us gravely from her elevated post.

John hurried forward, his comely British countenance embellished by a glow which I did not remember having ever observed there before.

"How do you do, Miss Bonson? May we come in?" he said eagerly. "Shall I find Mrs.

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Bonson at home, do you think?" he added, more diffidently.

"Yes, I think you will find my mother in the drawing-room."

Although she vouchsafed this information, Miss Bonson did not appear to think that politeness required her to make any movement toward going down stairs to receive us; she even resumed her shears.

"Take care that you don't stumble going through the archway. A good deal more of the plaster has come down since you were here last," she said over her shoulder as she turned away.

Obeying these directions, we passed under a narrow archway which led us into a tumble-down little court, where a rickety green paling surrounded a tank of very unattractive-looking water, upon whose surface a number of tadpoles, clustered together in slimy groups, started convulsively away upon our approach, and so on into the sitting-room which lay beyond.

Mrs. Bonson, whom we found reclining in the depths of a large divan, was a tall, thin, grace-

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ful-looking woman with a soft, plaintive voice and an air of distinguished melancholy. She was wrapped in a pale sea-green embroidered garment with a good deal of oriental jewelry of one sort or another scattered about her person.

She half rose from her chair as we entered, and then fell back again with an air of languor. "Mr. Hargrave—this *is* kind—descending from your magnificence," stretching out at the same time a very pretty slim hand adorned with numerous rings.

Hargrave duly presented me, and we sat down together in the recess in which Mrs. Bonson had been reclining: he on the divan beside her, I on a little chair so low as to cause my knees to rise up in uncomfortable proximity to my chin.

While the others talked I ventured to cast my eyes around the apartment. In shape it was not unlike the one which had been assigned to me in Hargrave's house, but longer and darker, the recess, or "*marabout*," as I am told it is called, in which we were sitting being indeed positively dark. Here and there a few

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pretty blue and white tiles had been let into the walls, and there was some nice-looking white plaster-work over the doorway; narrow strips of carpet, too, had been laid down over the brick floor: but there was no fire-place, and the whole effect was dank, dismal, and cheerless, even on this bright, summer-like afternoon, and must, one would imagine, be utterly intolerable in cold weather.

After some time tea appeared, carried in by a youthful Moorish menial, with a light coffee-colored complexion and yellow slippers very much down-trodden at the heels. Still the fair occupant of the balcony had not yet appeared, and I began to tremble lest we might already have had our first and only glimpse of her. At last, however, in response to sundry appeals to that effect from her mother, she appeared, and shortly afterward we adjourned into the garden, where Mrs. Bonson promptly claimed the support of my arm, leaving Hargrave and her daughter to follow.

There was not very much to be seen, the garden being, as I have said, any thing but extensive; what little there was, however, was en

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livened and lengthened by Mrs. Bonson's elaborate dissertations upon every separate article that we passed. She appeared to possess a vast fund of information on all things Moorish, a considerable portion of which she was good enough to impart then and there for my benefit.

"When one has spent eight winters in Algiers one may venture to think that one has got a little grasp," she said, in answer to my compliments upon her evident erudition. "And I think that I may say, without egotism, that I am incapable now of making a false step—a *serious* false step in the direction of Moorish art. One may not be able to be magnificent," she continued deprecatingly, "but one can always be *true*. Now, your cousin," glancing back, and sinking her voice to a confidential whisper—"your cousin, if you will forgive my saying so, is not always perfectly true—true to the best Moorish traditions, I mean, of course. His house is a little overdone: just a little too magnificent—*trop chargée*, as the French say. Every thing about him is a little too suggestive of wealth. A true Arab villa ought not to be suggestive of wealth," she continued, looking

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complacently around at her own meager accessories, which, it must be owned, were entirely free from any such reproach. "That new porch of his, for instance," she pursued—"that porch is French, not Arab—the worthless invention of a Parisian architect. I entreated him—almost upon my knees, I may say—not to build it, to delay at all events; to consult others; but no, he would not listen, he would build it; he would not be guided. And what is the result? The thing is an offense—an eyesore. I myself am invariably obliged to avert my eyes in going up his avenue, lest I should have the misfortune to see it. You will not be offended at my speaking so frankly, will you?" she continued persuasively. "It is not, believe me, that we—that is myself and my daughter—do not appreciate your cousin; on the contrary, it is because we do so entirely appreciate him, because we have so deep a regard for his high and sterling qualities that these things *wound* us."

I assured her that I was not in the least offended, that on the contrary I entirely agreed with her; that not being a millionaire myself

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I distinctly objected to any thing savoring too strongly of money-bags, and thus encouraged Mrs. Bonson continued to expiate further upon this evidently favorite theme.

"There ought to be a little *négligée*; just a little touch, I will not go so far as to say of squalor, but of neglect, of decadence, about an Arab house. To be in character it ought not to be too *soignée*, too symmetrically arranged. That is the error of your cousin's house, it is too symmetrical; every thing is in far too perfect order, too much like a well-ordered English establishment. We were so pleased—my daughter and I—when he told us that he had a cousin who was an artist coming to stay with him. We felt sure that an artist, even if he had not had time or opportunity to make Orientalism his *spécialité*, would have the right feeling. People here are so terribly deficient. They mean well, but so few of them have the right feeling; so few of them really *know*. I hope that you intend to make some really serious studies while you are here," Mrs. Bonson continued sweetly. "Moorish life and art has never had proper justice done to it; its magnifi-

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cent discrepancies, its glooms and grandeurs, it has never been approached with *Love!* If it were——" and she spread wide her jeweled hands with a gesture, which seemed to indicate that the results in that case would be something colossal.

All this was extremely flattering, still I could not forbear demurring a little at such very sweeping and wholesale statements.

"But," I said modestly, "surely Moorish art and Moorish subjects have been so extremely popular of late years. Look at Gerome; look at the number of French artists that have made it their special study. You can not go into any foreign exhibition, even in London, without coming upon dozens of French pictures upon the subject."

My hostess gave a little scream.

"*French*, my dear young man! The French, believe me, are utterly incapable of doing justice to true Moorish art. They loathe, hate, spurn, execrate it! There is not a Frenchman in all Algiers who would not willingly see the last fragment of the glorious old Byzantine architecture swept forever from the face of the

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earth. Their indifference, worse than indifference, on the subject is a national disgrace. As for their conduct to the natives—but on that subject I do not allow myself to speak—it is a scandal, an infamy, a thing to make the blood boil. The manner in which Frenchmen—yes, and French *ladies* too—speak of and to the *indigènes* here is simply revolting ; to one who like myself upholds the fixed and the absolute equality of all men, it seems enough alone to bring down the judgment of heaven upon their unfortunate country."

I admired her enthusiasm, and told her so, and she continued for some time longer to ring the changes upon it with equal ardor.

While absorbed in these engrossing topics we had made the circuit of the garden and were now returning to the house by a narrower path between two tall hedges which nearly met above our heads. A quantity of prickly pear which had been cut from one of these hedges lay across the path, and Mrs. Bonson called to an Arab who was working in a maize-plot hard by to come and remove the obstruction. Apparently the man did not under-

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stand, however, for he simply stared at her without moving.

"Evidently he does not know what you want," I said. "Let me. I can clear it away in an instant, I assure you."

"No, no, pray, pray, do not touch it," she cried, "it will hurt your hands; those small thorns are perfectly agonizing. I got one into my finger once, and never shall I forget the torture. Nothing earthly would ever induce me to touch another! Hilda, darling, desire that horrid creature in his own language to come and clear the path," she called to her daughter, who, with Hargrave, was approaching us down another path.

Miss Bonson obeyed, and the man, promptly advancing, gathered up the obnoxious bundle in his arms, whereupon Mrs. Bonson swept gracefully on into the house, and I followed meditatively in her rear.

When we got in we found the son of that house, a young gentleman of twenty, or thereabouts, reclining at ease on one of the sofas in the drawing-room, with a large cigar in his mouth. He did not strike me as by any means

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a particularly attractive youth. There was an air of jaunty, would-be superiority in his manner to his mother and sister which was not prepossessing. Mrs. Bonson made some sort of half-apologetic reference to the cigar and its appropriateness to an Arab interior, one which the smoker himself evidently regarded as utterly uncalled for and out of place.

Having already paid a tolerably prolonged call, we did not now delay, and a few minutes after found us again passing the slime-covered tank in the outer court, where the tadpoles again fled away in dismay at our approach, and so, through the disheveled garden, back to the high road beyond.

It seemed only natural to say something of the circle we had just left, and yet for some reason I felt a little embarrassed, not knowing exactly where to begin.

"Mrs. Benson seems to be an immense authority on every thing Moorish," I said, feeling that to be a safe subject. "My ignorance is considerably lightened since my conversation with her this afternoon."

"Yes, she and her daughter are both ex-

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tremely well-informed upon the subject," John answered seriously, "Miss Bonson especially. She has made a thorough study of it. She is artistic, and it naturally interests her from an artistic point of view. She speaks the language too, which very few Europeans do. She has a remarkable talent for languages."

"She is remarkably handsome," I exclaimed bluntly.

John seemed rather unprepared for such an abrupt declaration, for he made no immediate response.

"And the son—has he also a talent for language?" I inquired; "or what is his line?"

"I am not aware that he has any; he is supposed to be delicate—a family fiction, if you ask my opinion. The consequence is, he has been kept at home, indulged in every sort of way; in fact, thoroughly spoiled."

"They are here for his health then," I said inquiringly.

"Partly for his and partly for Mrs. Bonson's. Whatever it may have done for her, it has been the ruin of him. The climate is an enervating one enough naturally, and Master Mar-

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maduke does not require any aids to laziness. He has been spoiled, too, in other ways. His uncle, Lord Sandgate, has no sons, and it is not thought likely now that he will have any. At all events, Marmaduke Bonson and his mother reckon upon it as a certainty, and talk as if the latter's succession to the property was likely to occur to-morrow, though considering that Sandgate is only about five years older than myself, it is obvious to other people that they are likely to have to wait some time."

"And in the meantime the young gentleman proposes to himself to do nothing?" I said.

"Nothing absolutely. He lives with his mother, who has a small jointure: how much I have never ascertained, but it must be very small. Miss Bonson and he are also entitled to something when they come of age, which is not to be, I believe, until they are twenty-five. In the meantime a small allowance is made by the guardians for their keep, of which Marmaduke appropriates his own share, while his sister's goes to keeping the house going, consequently they tell her that if she marries at all

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she must marry a rich man in order that that little may not be encroached upon."

I involuntarily opened my eyes a little at this information. "Do they tell her so before you, for instance?" I inquired.

Hargrave colored. "Almost," he said curtly. "Marmaduke does at least. He is a remarkably outspoken young gentleman, as you will find when you have seen a little more of him, and makes no secret of regarding his feminine belongings as created wholly and solely for his own behoof. He has not lived under a Moorish roof for nothing."

We had been all this time steadily mounting the hill, and were now back again within the limit of Hargrave's dominions. He apologized, therefore, presently for leaving me, explaining that he had to see to the planting of a cargo of plants which had lately been successfully smuggled from England, and so saying disappeared down a side-walk while I strolled up and down the terraces, inhaling the scent of the lemon blossoms, and recreating my eyes upon the view of the snow-capped Djurjuras—so I had by this time learned to call them—now lost to

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sight, and now, again, distinctly visible, rising island or promontory fashion above a vast and colorless sea of mist. As I turned for the last time before entering the house, I found myself involuntarily bestowing a sort of wink or general glance of intelligence upon my surroundings. If there were some things that I had still to learn, and not a few that were decidedly perplexing, the whole position of affairs was certainly by no means so profound a mystery to me to-day as it had been the evening before!

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CHAPTER III.

DÉJEÛNER Á LA FOURCHETTE.

AFTER this we saw a good deal of the Bonson family. Algiers does not perhaps strike a stranger as a particularly sociable place, still there are certain recognized forms of hospitality to which every resident contributes his or her share. Of these, luncheons, or rather *déjeûners*, seem to be the most frequent, and accordingly at a *déjeûner* it was that I next had the pleasure of renewing my acquaintance with Miss Bonson, who arrived accompanied on this occasion only by her brother, Mrs. Bonson having sent an apology upon the score of health.

Our host was an elderly bachelor, renowned in the colony for his hospitality, also for his collection of plants, which was magnificent, his only formidable rival being my cousin John, whose advent was too recent to enable him

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seriously to contest palms with this horticultural veteran. We assembled in a large and very white apartment, fitted up in a style midway, as it seemed to me, between that of a mosque and a first-class waiting-room, from which we were ushered two by two to breakfast with as much formality as if the meal had been a dinner. To my lot it fell to take charge of a certain Madame de la Hoche, an elderly lady with granddaughters—two little pink and white mortals so like as to defy any mere stranger to know them apart. I was not a little alarmed at first, fearing that the strain on my French would be greater than it could respond to, but happily Madame de la Hoche turned out to be English, although long expatriation had given a decidedly foreign tinge not only to her sentiments, but also occasionally to her idioms. She was a charming old lady, nevertheless, a sort of grandmotherly benignity being combined in her case with what to my perceptions appeared a truly amazing amount of frankness, and we speedily became friends. Our places happened to be at the furthest end of the long table, at the opposite end of which

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Miss Bonson was seated beside a tall Oriental in white and crimson, Hargrave occupying the chair beyond. She looked strikingly handsome, and, the distance being fortunately enough to insure impunity, I could not resist giving expression to some of my admiration to my neighbor.

"Yes, she is a wonderfully handsome creature, is she not?" that lady answered cordially; "and as good, moreover, as she is handsome. She would make a charming wife for a millionaire, wouldn't she?" she added significantly. "Pity that she does not seem to think so herself."

"You mean——" I said hesitatingly.

"Your cousin? But certainly, who else? Oh, there is not the smallest occasion to look discreet, I assure you, my dear sir. To do him justice, he makes his wishes sufficiently evident, and for the matter of that so do her own family also—rather too much so, if you ask me my candid opinion."

"They urge her?" I said inquiringly.

"Urge! Something more than urge. They press, they drive, they persecute her—they

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give her no peace—they tell her that she is a wicked girl to hesitate, and that it is her bounden duty to accept him. If she does not already detest your cousin it is that her good sense tells her that it is not his fault, and that he is really nearly as much a victim in the matter as she is."

"I don't see what reason she can have to detest him," I said thoughtfully. "John Hargrave is really a very excellent fellow in his way."

"Quite so, we all know that; but if his name is only used as an engine for tormenting her, what then? Besides, though she is a clever girl, she has her foolish notions. She comes to me, and I talk sense to her. She paints a little, as you may have heard, and she has the unutterable folly to think that she could earn her own living by designing, illuminating—heaven knows what! Her present idea, I believe, is to start off to London at once, and try her fate there. You are an artist yourself, I am told, so that you will be able to form your own opinion as to what that fate would be likely to be."

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"There are a good many in the field already," I replied, shaking my head..

"I should think so! And a girl like that too, young, ignorant, inexperienced! You must look at her drawings and tell her they are all rubbish, that she will never earn a sou. Do not be afraid of putting the matter strongly. She is a sensible girl, and will thank you in the end."

"A pleasant office you propose for me truly!" I exclaimed, laughing.

My companion laughed a little also. "Seriously, it is a thousand pities that she can not make up her mind to accept your cousin," she said, looking meditatively across the table. "It is true that he is a trifle heavy; a little too solidly virtuous and reasonable, is he not? But what then? One can not have every thing! And he is as good—one can see that with only half an eye—as good as his own gold."

"All that is of no use, though, is it, if she refuses to like him?" I replied.

"It is not yet proved, though, that she does not like him, or would not like him if—if she

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had any one else for a mother—that woman—but there, my Christian charity gives way, I own, when I have to mention her name. Conceive the folly of dinning the girl's poverty into her ears; worse still, egging on that miserable little Marmaduke to do the same—a proud girl like that!"

"Miss Bonson does not seem particularly happy in her domestic circle," I said, smiling; "I hardly wonder at her being so willing to get away from it."

"Oh, as for that, happiness is a question of resources more than any thing else, and she has at least plenty to do. You would not think it to look at her as she sits there, but that girl works like a horse—like an actual maid-of-all-work. That ridiculous old house they live in would simply tumble about their ears, I believe, if it were not for her."

"Mrs. Bonson told me the other day that it did not do for an Arab house to be too well preserved," I said laughing. "She was eloquent in her regrets over the deplorable condition of my cousin's villa up there on the hill yonder."

"Yes, I know. Upon the subject of Moor-

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ish art she is maddening—simply maddening. That preposterous old *cabane* they live in was secured for a mere song, and no wonder, as any one can see that it is totally unfit for human habitation, and yet by sheer dint of talk and *vanterie* she believes herself, and induces other people to believe that it is the one pure and perfect specimen of Moorish domestic architecture left in Algiers, and that all the rest of us live in—I know not what sort of impositions."

"It sounds a very innocent sort of delusion, at all events," I said, remonstratingly.

"To you who are here for a moment it may be so, but for us who have houses of our own, and are not without our own little pretensions, it is, to say the least, trying."

"And does Miss Bonson share her mother's illusions in that respect?" I inquired.

"No, no, *pour ça non*, she is not so silly. In fact she is a very sensible girl, except as regards this ridiculous notion of independence. As if any one ever yet heard of a girl that was independent! The thing is a simple impossibility—a contradiction in so many words."

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"And yet it seems to me that I know a good many that are so," I replied, rather perversely. "But then I am not sure that they try and combine it with what you would call society," I added. "No doubt that introduces complications."

My interlocutrix looked at me with a little air of surprise.

"You really know girls—nice girls—girls whom you would wish your sisters, if you have any sisters, to resemble—who are independent?" she said, in a tone of astonishment.

"Certainly," I answered. "Art students, for instance, seem to me to be all so, more or less; it is only a question of degree. Very likely they may have fathers and mothers somewhere in the background; but then, as nobody ever sees them, they might, as far as all practical purposes are concerned, just as well be non-existent."

Madame de la Hoche shook her head.

"I suppose it must be that I am getting old, or that I have lived too long in France," she said; "but to me I own the position seems impossible, untenable, not to be conceived. A

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woman unmarried and independent, appears to me an anomaly—a sort of monster."

"What would you do with her then," I said, "seeing that obviously all women can not be married?"

"There are always convents."

"Not for Protestants?"

"Yes. Protestant convents—sisterhoods, which are the same thing."

"But are you not rather hard upon your own sex?" I said remonstratingly. "Why insist upon every woman being a parasite whether she has a turn that way or not?"

"A parasite?"

"Yes. If she is to be bound hand and foot to something or somebody, no matter whether it is an institution or an individual, that is being a parasite, is it not?"

Madame de la Hoche eyed me with a little air of benevolence not unmixed with amusement.

"My dear sir, forgive me for saying so, but you are very young," she said, "and your theories are very nice and generous and amiable, but they will not wear. Believe me, the

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world was not born yesterday; on the contrary, it is very old, older than you are, older even than I am. Take my word for it our forerunners knew what they were about; they knew their own business at least as well as we know ours—possibly better—and what they found to be an impossibility we shall certainly find to be an impossibility too."

"I am quite sure that *my* forerunners understood their own business," I said, laughing, "but I am not by any means so very clear about *yours*."

"You think they would have done better for themselves if they had insisted upon being doctors, lawyers, apothecaries—soldieresses and sailoresses, for any thing I know."

"I don't say that, but I think no one is any the worse for a little liberty—not even young women."

"Including the liberty of being extremely foolish?"

"Certainly, if they like it. No doubt they would begin in that way, but it does not at all follow that they would end so. I believe myself that young women are to the full as capa-

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ble of taking care of themselves as young men. Look at the Americans!"

Apparently Madame de la Hoche declined to look at any thing of the kind: instead, she looked at me with an expression of mild, but distinct disapproval.

"Do you know I begin to suspect you of preferring that your cousin should remain unmarried?" she said quietly.

"No, no, indeed; don't think that. What should put such an idea into your head?" I exclaimed. "Of what Machiavellism do you suspect me? I assure you my remarks were perfectly disinterested. In fact, as far as my wishes are concerned, I should be perfectly contented to see him married to-morrow."

"*A la bonne heure!* You are better, then, than your theories, and, in spite of them, I hope you will *not* help Miss Bonson to run away from her relations, and *will* help me to bring about this marriage, for I assure you I have set my heart upon it."

"With all mine," I said; "and if any thing I can do will assist in the matter, even to the length of telling Miss Bonson to her face that

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her drawings are abominable, why you may count upon my support!"

Not long after this we all left the dining-room arm-in-arm, as we had entered it, the whole party adjourning outside the house, where coffee was served upon a terrace overlooking the neighboring grounds. Though smaller than those surrounding Hargrave's house, as a sample of what sun and science combined could achieve, these grounds were, if possible, even more remarkable. Immediately in front of where we were standing there opened a small avenue of palm-trees—small, that is to say, in point of numbers, there not being probably more than eight or ten on either side, but in point of height and feathery luxuriance really marvelous, the more so considering that they had all been planted within the tenancy of their present proprietor. It was even said that one or two had borne fruit which had duly ripened, but as this event had invariably happened at a season when no visitors were in Algeria, it was apt to be spoken of in a tone of some incredulity by other horticulturists!

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Close to the entrance of this palm-avenue the tall Oriental I had previously noticed was standing conversing with some ladies as we emerged from the house. Seen with this appropriate background, and under the full blaze of his own African sunlight, he was certainly a resplendent object, the capacious folds of his magnificent burnous flung back over one shoulder displaying the elaborately embroidered under garments, the belt with its jeweled dagger, and the large spurred red morocco boots reaching nearly up to the knees.

"How wonderfully fluent his French seems to be," I observed to Madame de la Hoche, beside whom I still stood.

"Yes, admirable; his manners too are admirable. He is really a most agreeable and cultivated person," she said. "At the same time," she added confidentially, "I own I never can quite get over the oddity of finding myself conversing with a perfectly polite being, who all the time in his secret soul regards one as belonging to a different and an immeasurably lower creation from himself: something between a mongoose and a canary-

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bird, whose proper place at all events is in a cage."

"And yet there, after all, you only have the extreme logical outcome of those theories of dependence you were just now propounding?" I responded maliciously.

Either Madame de la Hoche did not catch the rejoinder, or she may have preferred to turn a deaf ear to it; at any rate, at that moment she turned aside to speak to an acquaintance who had just approached her.

Looking round for Hargrave, I found that he had been dragged away by Mr. Yates—that was the name of our old entertainer—to inspect some recent purchase; accordingly I ventured to approach Miss Bonson, who, with her brother and one of Madame de la Hoche's little granddaughters, was standing rather apart, examining one of those small brown pendent wasps'-nests which may be seen hanging from so many an Algerian branch or ledge.

There seemed to be an altercation going on upon the subject as I approached, young Mr. Bonson having just generously offered to cut it off and present it to his younger companion.

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"No, no, Marmaduke, you are *not* to touch it," I heard his sister say as I came up. "Please do not," she added, in a more beseeching tone.

"I wasn't speaking to you, my sweet sister; I spoke to Mademoiselle de la Hoche."

"But indeed I don't want it, Mr. Bonson—I don't, really," that little lady interposed. "It is much prettier where it is. Besides, the wasps will sting you. See, here comes one of them back," she added, pointing to a small yellow object which was careering viciously in their direction.

"Oh, pooh, I don't think much of *their* stings!" he replied heroically; at the same time judiciously drawing back so as to put some little distance between himself and that incensed proprietor. Miss Bonson seemed to be satisfied that any further danger to the wasps'-nest was at an end, for she turned away along a path running parallel to the terrace, and I followed beside her.

At that part of the grounds the most conspicuous object was a tall white house, which rose immediately beyond the palms upon the

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opposite side of the road, its high walls, pierced with few, and those jealously guarded, openings, having something secretive and sinister in their aspect, which attracted my attention.

"What a mysterious-looking house," I said. "Whom does it belong to, I wonder?"

"It belongs to Ali Mooshid," she answered, glancing toward the tall Oriental who was still standing in front of the palms. "Those are some of his daughters you see up there," she added, pointing to the top of the house where two or three little white objects had just shown themselves between the sky and the edge of the parapet.

"Daughters?" I repeated, following this latter indication with my eyes. "Why, those are surely little boys we see."

"No, indeed, they are his daughters. He has no sons. But then Arab women, you know, wear"—I wondered for a half second what periphrase she was going to employ, but she ended her sentence with "trowsers."

"Oh, to be sure, yes, so they do," I replied. "Of course one sees plenty of them about in the streets, but they are really so swathed up

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that it is not very easy to see what they have or have not got on. I thought, though, that Moorish ladies were never allowed to show themselves unveiled even at so discreet a distance as that?" I added.

"Yes, they are allowed to go upon the roof," she answered. "In fact they must do so, as it is the only place where they could get any air or exercise. There is no wall, as you may see, round the garden, so they are never permitted to walk in it. I go and see them sometimes, and they take me up there, and I explain to them about Algiers, and whereabouts the shops are. That is what interests them chiefly."

"You mean to say that they have actually never been to Algiers?" I exclaimed, looking down at its white walls crowded together close at hand.

"Never. Their mother was there once in her youth. That is one of the great events of the family."

"Poor things!" I ejaculated. "However, they are so ignorant, I suppose, that they really hardly know what they lose?"

"No, do you know, they are not really by

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any means so very ignorant. They all talk and read French, and one of them sings a little and is learning to play the piano. But then Ali Mooshid is supposed to be exceedingly advanced—quite French in his ideas. He even allows books and newspapers to come into the house, which most Mahometans strictly forbid."

"Well, all I can say then is, I pity them the more," I answered. "What an existence! I suppose they look forward immensely to marriage—that at least gives them a change."

"Very little. One of them is already engaged, but she has not yet seen her future husband, though the wedding is to be the week after next."

"Never seen him?"

"No; and even afterward there are hardly any of their relatives whom they are ever allowed to see. One day last spring my mother and I called there expecting to find Ali Mooshid at home; but though we waited some time he never appeared, and we afterward found that the reason was because his own sister-in-law—a fat woman of fifty—happened to be calling

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there at the same time, and it was impossible for them to meet."

"How preposterous!" I exclaimed. "Somehow, although one has known about it all one's life, when it is brought home to one like that, it seems as if one heard it for the first time. It is hardly conceivable that people should go on generation after generation perpetuating such a system."

"And yet this, I assure you, is quite a favorable specimen. Ali Mooshid is an unusually indulgent father; in fact, is rather looked down upon by other Moslems for his concessions to western ideas."

"He is a very splendid-looking fellow at all events, whatever his traditions may be," I answered, glancing back again toward the group upon the terrace. "It would be really almost worth while—from an artistic point of view, of course, I mean—being committed to such a monstrous and indefensible theory of existence if it enabled a man to look like that. What poor, insignificant, self-conscious looking beings those other men seem beside him—don't they?"

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"Not Mr. Hargrave!" she said quickly.

"Well, no, now you mention it, not perhaps so much John Hargrave," I responded critically. "Somehow he does contrive to hold his own, in spite of the disadvantage of his frock-coat and his puggaree. Perhaps it is that lordly-looking beard of his which does it, or what should you suggest?"

Miss Bonson did not seem disposed to discuss the point. She even looked, I fancied, a trifle embarrassed.

"I wonder what has become of my brother?" she observed, after we had taken a few more turns along the walk. "We promised my mother to be back early, so I think it would be better if I were to go and look for him."

We retraced our steps accordingly toward the palms, but before arriving there were met by Hargrave, who had just with difficulty escaped from the clutches of his horticultural ally, and was hastening toward us.

Upon being discovered young Mr. Bonson entirely declined, however, to be removed. He was enjoying a vigorous flirtation with both

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Madame de la Hoche's little granddaughters at once, and had no mind to forego that diversion. He was not long left to enjoy it in peace, however, as that lady herself was upon the point of departing, and now came forward to offer Miss Bonson a place in her carriage, which the latter promptly accepted. As the carriage disappeared down the mesembryanthemum-bordered slope, I glanced at Hargrave, who was standing a little before me on the terrace, and whose face wore an expression to which, taken in connection with Madame de la Hoche's lucid remarks, and my own previous observations, I had no very great difficulty in applying an appropriate clew.

Certainly, if in the society of the brother he could be held to find consolation for the loss of the sister, he ought that evening to have been a happy man! Finding that we were on our way to the town, young Mr. Bonson handsomely offered to accompany us, and, later on, to return and dine at the Château d'Oc. My first impressions of that young gentleman were not, I must own, ameliorated by these opportunities for further acquaintanceship, in-

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deed a less attractive and more exasperating individual it has rarely been my lot to encounter. Under John's roof especially his demeanor was marked by a coolness and an informality which was really, in its way, inimitable; helping himself, among other trifles, to his host's favorite cigars, and at dinner pouring out for himself glass after glass of champagne with an airy affability which seemed already to betoken relationship.

Hargrave's good-nature seemed to know no bounds, but my own was less equal to the strain—probably from want of a similar inducement. At all events, I took myself off early to bed upon plea of fatigue, leaving the other two to entertain each other, a process which consisted in the elder man listening, while the younger one expounded his views upon various subjects with a fervor not a little due evidently to his recent potations. "Wonderful," thought I, with that vicarious philosophy which comes so easily to most of us under similar circumstances,—"wonderful indeed the charm which induces a man like John to sit and be bored to death in his own house by a

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wretched, half-tipsy little cub like that, and all, forsooth, because he happens to be the brother of somebody else!" Certainly among the novelties which awaited me in Algiers, to find this respectable middle-aged cousin of mine a prey to the enslaving emotion, was about the last I should ever have expected. If it did not exactly enhance my respect for him, if, on the contrary, it rather took from that awe which had hitherto encircled the millionaire of the family, upon the other hand, it lent a certain easy and even patronizing kindliness to my reflections, of which they had hitherto, to my own consciousness, been devoid. "What a desperate bore it must be for him, poor old fellow!" I thought complacently, as I stretched myself luxuriously upon his velvet cushions, and gazed across his marble courts, all gleaming and glittering in the moonlight, "what a desperate bore to feel that he is accepted—if he ever *is* accepted at all, which judging from present indications I doubt—not because the young lady likes him, but because the young lady's mamma considers him too big a prize to be allowed to escape, or the young lady's

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brother has a fancy for drinking Château Lafitte, and smoking cigars at twenty-five shillings a dozen! Well, at least, Adolphus Bell, my friend, if ever you are accepted by any one it is clear that you may lay this flattering unction to your soul that it will not be for the sake of your cigars or your Château Lafitte, nor yet for your marble courts or your hanging gardens, nor any other of your adventitious advantages. No, my friend, there are respects in which the poor but honest sons of toil have an advantage over the bloated and pampered millionaire. In the relations of the heart, where soul speaks to soul, and the secrets of the affections are laid bare, there wealth and all its glittering train is of no avail; there worth alone decides the day; to the man himself, and not to the man's cellars or his moneybags is the prize adjudged"—a line of reflection which it will be obvious to the least discriminating reader, was too agreeable to be immediately curtailed!

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CHAPTER IV.

I GO FOR A VERY EARLY WALK.

A FEW mornings after the events recorded in the last chapter I happened to awake early, before the sun, in fact. It was not yet five o'clock, but then five o'clock on a March morning in Africa carries no such tremendous terrors with it as at home, so, after a few futile efforts to go to sleep again, I resolved to get up and start for an early stroll.

There had been a heavy sea fog at night, and when I got down into the garden every thing I passed was drenched with moisture. Up the narrow path I followed, the acacia bushes seemed to have all involved themselves like houris in thin, transparent veils, through which the leaves and twigs peeped seductively. Below the sea lay like a glass, set in that peculiarly dreamy calm which in this climate is said so often to precede wild weather.

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Save where a small steamer was slowly steaming away toward Oran, not so much as a trail was visible over the whole wide surface of the Mediterranean. A long, gray bank of clouds which rested upon the horizon, wearing all the air of some new island or continent, suddenly sprung into existence out of the deep.

Early as it was, there were already signs of activity. From the Champs de Mars, which lay directly below me, I could hear the bugle notes sounding at intervals, and could see the little blue and red-legged men—reduced by distance to the proportions of ants—swarming busily about over its brown expanse. Getting away from the knoll on which Hargrave's house stands, I passed on along deep lanes overhung with cistus and clematis, and then across low and undulating hill-tops, still green and attractive in places, but spoiled and denuded by the vineyards which in this direction are rapidly swallowing up all the natural growth around them. Before long I found myself straying among a multitude of small stony paths, all apparently diverging in oppo-

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site directions, so I looked round in hopes of seeing somebody to guide me through the labyrinth.

Presently, a *sœur de charité*, returning home from some early mission, appeared in sight advancing down one of the paths, her great white cap disturbing all the carefully balanced grays and greens of the landscape. Accordingly I waited her approach, and we walked on sociably for some little distance together. She was a rosy-cheeked, cheerful little being, without a touch of asceticism, and showed no unnecessary alarm at my vicinity. Just as we were about to part, the sun, suddenly mounting above the next ridge, shot its first great penetrating shaft of light across the smoking furrows, dropping down a golden rain upon the brown, upturned earth and dripping hedgerows, causing every thing within sight to blaze transfigured in the full effulgence.

"*Tiens, c'est gentil, n'est-ce pas?*" my little companion said, pointing a plump, approving finger toward the luminary as she spoke.

After this I walked on alone, following her indications as best I could, until I came to one

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of the edges of the Sahhel, and then sat me down upon a big stone to take my fill of the view, the low cactus and palmetto-covered hills sinking rapidly away at my feet, with here and there a roof rising mushroom-fashion out of the jungle, and beyond the great vaporous plain of the Metydja shining iridescent in the morning light, its broad, corn-covered waves sweeping southward, until they broke against the first rocky ramparts of the Atlas Mountains, rising against a sky as blue and seemingly as solid as a dome of lapis lazuli.

Coming back I again lost my way, as is indeed my habit whenever I go for a solitary ramble, my organs of locality being of that ingenious order which seem invariably to be giving the most infallible indications at the very moment that they are in reality leading me most hopelessly astray. This time no ministering angel in a white cap arrived to my rescue, so I blundered on as best I could, expecting every moment to find the fierce fangs of some trusty watch-dog meeting in my tendon Achilles, until at last I hit upon a path which seemed to me to be leading in the right direc-

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tion. Down this accordingly I hastened, and presently encountered a group of Arabs, consisting of five women and three children, all laden with heavy burdens, followed by an old man armed with a big stick, but otherwise empty-handed. One of the children had just stumbled over a stone, and the women were laughing loudly at the mishap. They seemed ready enough to be sociable, poor souls! and nodded good-humoredly in response to my respectful salutations, but the man and his stick hurried wrathfully up and bustled them away, so that I speedily lost sight of them. Could they all five of them have been his wives? I wondered.

By this time I was beginning to be desperately hungry, and repented that I had not thought of laying in any provisions for the road. Seeing, therefore, a house with a sort of shed or arbor before it, and an invitation to wayfarers in the form of a worm-eaten table, two chairs, and a few mats, I stopped and inquired whether I could have some coffee.

A sour-faced woman, with a smart yellow handkerchief tied across her head, came and

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set a table for me; set it, at least, so far as to provide a plate—not a particularly clean one—also a knife, fork, and spoon, with a coffee cup and salt cellar, after which she retired, and for some time no further signs of any festivity seemed forthcoming. Having waited for some time, and being, as I have said, extremely hungry, I ventured, hearing voices on the other side of a partition which divided the erection, to step round and see for myself what the prospects were of breakfast. My amazement may, however, be conceived on finding myself suddenly face to face with no less a person than Miss Bonson, who was calmly seated before another similar table, regaling herself with a large cup of milk and a slice of brown bread.

My astonishment was altogether beyond concealment.

"Are you having breakfast here?" I inquired, gazing helplessly around.

"I am having some milk and bread, if that is breakfast," she answered, smiling a little at the question. "I often do so when I go out for an early walk," she added.

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I looked round again. There was absolutely no one in sight, except a dignified old gentleman in a turban and a long white beard, who, seated cross-legged in an obscure corner, was absorbed in reflections, apparently so profound as to render him unconscious of all surroundings.

"May I come and drink my coffee beside you when it arrives, or am I bound to keep my own side of the partition?" I inquired.

"Certainly, come if you like—why not?" she answered simply.

Not being prepared with a reply, I adopted the wiser course of bringing in my chair, the one on which Miss Bonson was sitting appearing to be the only other which the establishment afforded, and we seated ourselves socially at opposite sides of the rickety little table, upon which my own portion of the entertainment was shortly afterward deposited.

Whether it was due to my previous hunger, or to the salubrious air of the locality in which we found ourselves, or to the exhilaration of this most unexpected encounter, I have rarely relished a meal more thoroughly than I did this

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same very impromptu little festivity. Miss Bonson, too, appeared, I thought, well content. Her color was brighter and her spirits several degrees higher than I had previously observed them. The only person who did not seem to appreciate the incident was the woman with the yellow handkerchief, who came in several times, casting each time, I thought, any thing but a favorable glance in my direction. A small Arab boy had come up the lane and now stood leaning against one of the posts which supported the arbor, putting out, as if mechanically, from time to time a small dirty hand for alms. He was a pretty little being, despite his dirt, his battered red fez set well back on his small, close-shaven head, his few other nondescript garments hanging about him in picturesque fragments, his brown legs crossed gracefully one above the other as he patiently awaited our pleasure.

A dog belonging to the house came growling up, sniffing angrily round the child, so Miss Bonson begged the woman to call it off.

She only patted it, however.

"Fido is like me, he hates the Arabs," she

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said, with a harsh laugh and a glance over her shoulder at the placid smoker in the corner. "Thieves, liars, murderers, every one of them!"

Miss Bonson looked annoyed.

"Other people can tell lies and steal, as well as Arabs, Mme. Joubert," she said, in a tone of displeasure. "And as to murders, it is a long time since any thing of the kind has been heard of."

"A long time! *Dame!* Mademoiselle may not hear of it—very likely not, but that is because people do not speak of such things before mademoiselle; I can tell her that they happen constantly, every day, *à tous propos.* It is not six months since an old man in a house on the road to Bonfarik was murdered by seven Arabs, two of them his own herdsmen. They came very early in the morning, when every one else was away at the fair. Three of them staid outside to keep watch, and the others went in and robbed the house of every thing they could find in it, and then because the old man would cry out they murdered him with his own kitchen chopper, and

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carried him out and buried him in a corner of the garden. *Hein!* What does mademoiselle say to that? Was that nothing?"

"Were they caught?" I inquired.

"*Dieu merci*, yes. They were seen by a girl as they were going away, and caught, and tried, and convicted, too, every one of them, at the next *cours d'assise*."

"And what was done to them?"

"Done! *Dame! On leur a coupé le cou*" —with a significant sweep of one finger across her own bare brown throat.

"What, all of them?" I said, in some surprise.

"*Dame!* Yes, all; and a good thing too! *Ca leur a fait du bien!*" and gathering up her now empty cups and saucers the woman turned brusquely away to the kitchen.

"What an unpleasant woman!" I said a few minutes later, when we had paid our reckoning and were strolling down the path toward Algiers.

"Madame Joubert? She is very unjust certainly to the Arabs, but then so are many of

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the colonists—most of them, in fact, unfortunately—she is not a bad woman otherwise. There are some little children belonging to a niece of hers whom she is keeping there at her own expense, though, of course, she is extremely poor."

"Her house is a meritorious one, at all events," I said, glancing back. "What magnificent black hollows under the eaves, and those yellow gables, catching the light on their tops! I must come up here again with a canvas some day, and see whether I can not make something of it."

Miss Bonson did not immediately answer; my remark seemed to have started her upon some new train of thought.

"Have you always intended to be an artist?" she presently asked, abruptly.

"Well no, not always," I answered, smiling. "Always is a long time. If I recollect rightly, my first intention was to be a stoker on the railway, the noise and lights probably suggested the notion. Then for a long time I thought a circus rider's career the most glorious upon earth, and there have been moments

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when I aspired to be a pastry-cook, but that was chiefly when I was hungry."

Miss Bonson looked as if she thought my pleasantry a little ill-timed. "I didn't mean that," she said gravely. "I meant, how long have you been studying art seriously—as a profession?"

"Between seventeen and eighteen years, I think."

"So long? Yet you look young."

"I am twenty-eight. I don't know whether you call that young or old."

"Of course it is young. You really began, then, when you were only nine years old?"

"About then. My mother had been reading about some genius who never could learn arithmetic, and disfigured all the walls in his vicinity with daubs, but who was supporting his family and painting crowned heads by the time he was thirty; so, as I never could learn arithmetic, and ruined my copy-books by scribbling over them, the analogy seemed complete, and they and I were taken away from school and dispatched to an old Mr. Sturdy, a drawing-master, who flung the latter into the

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fire, and set me down to draw wheelbarrows."

"Wheelbarrows! Why wheelbarrows?"

"Wheelbarrows were his *specialité*. It was before the era of scientific designing, happily for me, and my old gentleman was very strong on what he called 'the round,' maintaining that any one who could draw a wheelbarrow properly could draw any thing. And I am not sure that he was very far wrong."

"And how long did you go on with him?"

"About five years—not doing wheelbarrows all the time, you understand. After a while I was promoted to stable-buckets and coal-scuttles, and then to ears and noses—plaster ones—from that to hands and feet, and so to the antique generally; by which time I was nearly fifteen and beginning to try for the Academy."

"To exhibit?"

"No, no, for the schools. I tried twice and failed, but at last got in, and staid there in all five years.

"Since then I have been—well, hammering on, painting a good many pictures and selling—by no means quite so many."

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"But you really are succeeding now? You have got over all the difficulties, have you not?" she said, stopping short, and speaking with a sort of insistence.

"Have the crowned heads begun to appear in my studio, do you mean?" I said smiling. "No, Miss Bonson, I am afraid I can't honestly say they have. As to supporting my family, I have none to support. I support myself and that is about the very most that I can say I do."

My companion sighed, and walked on again with an air of discouragement.

"I had no idea that an artist's training took so long," she said, musingly, after awhile.

"Well, yes, it is a long road," I answered, "and I am not sure that any of the short cuts I ever heard of curtail it particularly either."

Miss Bonson made no more inquiries upon the subject of art, and presently changed the conversation, and we talked for some time upon indifferent matters; before parting, however, she asked me to call some afternoon at their house, as she had some drawings about which she would like my opinion. I promised to do

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so, and certainly had every intention of keeping my word. Several things, however, intervened during the next two or three days to hinder my availing myself of the invitation, the consequence being that before the visit took place we met again, this time at a dinner given by Hargrave to his Algerian acquaintances.

The first person to arrive at this entertainment was Mrs. Bonson, who came sailing in with her usual swan-like grace, followed by her son and daughter. She sank gracefully into a chair, but almost immediately afterward sprang up again and advanced, with a series of small ecstatic shrieks, toward some curtains which hung in an obscure recess.

"Ah, so you *have* got those Circassian curtains!" she exclaimed, taking hold of the fabric in question with the tips of the two delicately-gloved fingers. "Now I *do* call that nice of you, dear Mr. Hargrave! It is such a comfort when one can feel that one is able to be of real *use* to one's friends, and the minute I caught sight of them I *knew* they were exactly what you wanted. I said to my friend, Erza Ben Ebenezar—such a delightful man, isn't he?

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only so wickedly dear—though that, of course, doesn't matter to *you*"—with a heartrending sigh—"I said to him: 'Be sure you allow nobody to have a glimpse of those curtains until Mr. Hargrave has seen them—he will buy them if any one will.' But please, please do forgive me, dear Mr. Hargrave, if I say that they are not hung rightly; they are not *indeed*. Do excuse me, but you ought not to allow your servants to loop them up like that; it is cruel—positively cruel—Eastern fabrics should never be looped; the loop is a mere Western barbarism—a horrible thing utterly destructive of all form and harmony. And that cord too! Oh dear, *dear* Mr. Hargrave, how could you ever allow yourself to be induced to sit in the room with such a cord? I must close my eyes, I must indeed."

"Well, I did not know that it was so shocking, you see, Mrs. Bonson," Hargrave said, smiling, "otherwise I should not of course have had it. But if you will kindly show me now how to arrange them, I will see that for the future they are always hung the proper way."

"Why, of course I will, nothing in the world

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can be simpler, it only requires a little knack. Once the eye is accustomed——Hildegarde, dearest, will *you* arrange those curtains of Mr. Hargrave's properly."

"Don't you think they do very nicely as they are, mamma?" responded Miss Bonson, who had hitherto kept aloof from the scene of interest.

"Oh, no, my love, they do not indeed; they are shocking—quite shocking. I beg— nay I must *insist*—that you come at once and arrange them before any one else arrives."

"What rot it all is," muttered the amiable Marmaduke from the sofa on which he had thrown himself. "As if it mattered two straws how the curtains were hung, or whether there were any curtains there at all for that matter."

While I was concealing the smile evoked by this undutiful sally, Hargrave's attention was called away to some fresh arrivals, and shortly afterward the rooms became filled.

A few of the guests I had met before, but the greater number were total strangers to me, which left me the more free to observe what was going on. Hargrave's disadvantageous

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position as the owner of a house unprovided with a mistress, was largely compensated for by Mrs. Bonson, who kindly swam rather than walked from group to group, pointing out, explaining, patronizing, expending all the treasures of her flowery volubility right and left with amazing profusion. Whether he perceived, or did not perceive, her efforts—was grateful for them, or the reverse—was not apparent from Hargrave's manner. He pursued the even tenor of his own way, greeting every one with his usual somewhat matter-of-fact cordiality, introducing stray guests to one another, and assigning the respective order in which they were to proceed to the meal, in the course of which latter maneuver I found myself being marched up to a young lady with a round freckled face, a pair of wide eyes and a mouth to match, who had, as I speedily learned, arrived at Algiers the night before in her papa's yacht.

She was rather a good-looking young woman despite her freckles, and once seated at the dinner table, I began discoursing politely to her upon the usual local topics, but I soon

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found the ground cut from under my feet. "Had I been to Bizerta, and Bone, and Constantine, and Tangiers, and Tetuan?" she rapidly inquired. For her part she thought she liked Mogador about as well as any other place upon the African coast. There was some fun in walking about a town where, if you appeared without a veil, they stared at you as if you had got two heads, or were committing every crime in the decalogue! Algiers was a horribly stupid place, wasn't it? There was no fun at all to be got out of it. She could not think, in fact, why her father had put in there, except that he had hoped to find some letters. When they left they were going on straight to Tangiers without stopping. Not to see it, of course, for they had been there dozens of times before, but because the *Albatross*, and the *Warhawk*, and the *Cuttlefish* had done it in fifty-four hours, and their skipper was sure they could do it in fifty-one, and she was sure that they could do it too; for as for the *Cuttlefish*, every one knew that she was no better than an old tub, and no more fit to sail against *their* boat than a washhand-basin. Finding that I

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had not been to any of those places, that I did not possess a yacht, and moreover should not have cared to sail in one if I had, my young lady (I never to the end ascertained her name), soon dropped my acquaintance, and shortly afterward devoted herself to a stout, copper-faced individual who sat upon her other side, and who probably *had* been to all those places, for his complexion looked as if he had been held forcibly in the teeth of a gale ever since his earliest infancy.

The evening was not, I thought, lively. There was a little indifferent music, and a good deal of wandering about, and vague gaping at Hargrave's curiosities, which were eloquently commented upon by their usual expositor, who undulated from room to room, taking various guests to this and that point of attraction. Once I observed that Miss Bonson and Hargrave had got together in a recess, he apparently telling her something—I was too far off to know what—which seemed to interest her. Just then, however, Mrs. Bonson happened to sail by on the arm of one of her various escorts, and as she did so paused to fling a glance of

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mingled maternal pride and commendation in their direction, upon the receipt of which her daughter seemed suddenly to stiffen into rigidity, and I shortly afterward observed that she had left Hargrave and was standing in close proximity to the piano; nor did they, so far as I could observe, exchange another syllable during the remainder of the evening.

As she was the first to arrive so Mrs. Bonson was also the last to depart, apparently under the impression that it was incumbent upon her to see the rest of the guests away before quitting herself the scene of her elocutionary triumphs. Descending the staircase at last, with her daughter upon my arm, I could hear her a few steps below us still pouring forth unabated streams of volubility into Hargrave's patient ear.

"So *very* successful, dear Mr. Hargrave, so extremely agreeable, so admirably arranged in every respect—really quite remarkably so. Not, you will understand me to mean, merely the material details; those *every* one would expect and understand would be of first-rate quality under *your* roof. What I am speaking of are

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the more ethereal parts of the entertainment—the grouping together, as the artists say. So exactly the right people invited; no one asked whom one could by any possibility dislike encountering; and really Algiers is getting every day more and more mixed. I often declare that I shall have soon to pull up my own poor little tent pegs and flee away to some spot where vulgarity and noisy ostentation are less rampant than they are getting to be here. But you, dear Mr. Hargrave, have so much innate good taste and feeling that one could never, never have any thing of that sort to fear under *your* roof."

I felt my companion's hand stiffen nervously upon my arm as all this effusive tide of patronage was poured out upon Hargrave's unresisting head. He received it himself, however, with his usual stolid good-humor; put Mrs. Bonson into the carriage—one of his own, by the way, which had been sent to fetch the party—and then turned quickly round to assist her daughter. For a moment the latter's hand rested upon his arm, but neither spoke until Hargrave, drawing back, wished the party gen-

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erally "good-night." Marmaduke scrambled in, the door was shut, and they drove away.

"You weren't bored, I hope, Dol?" my host said, some five minutes later, as we were mounting the staircase with our bedroom candles in our hands.

"No, really, I was hardly bored at all," I answered. "I was rather amused, in fact, than otherwise. Do tell me, Hargrave, does Mrs. Bonson always pour out such floods of eloquence as she did to-night. I thought at one time we should have been literally washed away. What a deperately oppressive woman she is, to be sure! Living permanently with her must be like residing inside a factory, or taking lodgings under the clapper of a flour-mill?"

Hargrave looked vexed.

"She does talk a good deal, certainly, but she's not a bad-hearted woman," he said quickly. "Of course she has her tiresome ways. So most people have, for the matter of that." And with a hasty "good-night" he stumped off up stairs to his own room.

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I too retired to mine, which was upon a lower level, with the discomfited feeling of a man who has made a joke, and whose joke had fallen flat. John's manners decidedly are not pleasant. As a host he certainly is good-nature personified, and in point of generosity, in small matters no less than great, he stands in marked and favorable contrast to any other millionaire I have ever known or heard of; on the other hand his phlegm and his good-nature are alike fatal to conversation, since most epigrams obviously must be made at *somebody's* expense. He has a fashion too of not attending, of going on in his own way, thinking his own thoughts, sometimes even uttering them aloud, as if forgetful of one's existence, a trait which is, to say the least, trying. Several times lately I have had to speak to him twice and even oftener before I could rouse him sufficiently to obtain an answer, though unless he is trying to calculate what the aggregate of his fortune amounts to at compound interest, or how long it would have to accumulate before it could pay off the National Debt, I can not see what he can have so particularly to think

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about. There is something oppressive about the man too, which increases the longer one is *tête-à-tête* with him; he seems to grow larger and larger somehow, and one's self in proportion to shrink and dwindle away. Now there really is no justification for any such feeling. Setting aside his money—which every one knows is a purely adventitious matter, no more a merit of his than his having large hands or being six feet high—setting aside this all inequality so far as I can see ceases, indeed but that it might seem to savor of self laudation I should be disposed to say that it began again upon the other side. In maintaining that I am a cleverer man than John Hargrave I can hardly be accused of any extravagant personal eulogy, seeing that he obviously is not a clever man at all, as every one who knows him is perfectly well aware. Again, as regards my really very innocent observation about Mrs. Bonson, could any thing be more ridiculous, more perverse on his part than to take it amiss? That exalted being is not yet his mother-in-law, indeed it seems to me to be quite upon the cards that she never may be. And if she were

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even, I have never yet heard of the man in whose eyes that relationship presented itself in any particularly sacred light!

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CHAPTER V.

HARGRAVE MAKES A PROPOSAL.

NO part of the idiosyncrasies of the Château d'Oc are to my perceptions more perplexing than the number of idle and as it seems to me utterly superfluous inmates with which its space is crowded. Setting aside the host and his guests, we have first and foremost old Hicklebury, the butler, an aged and asthmatic functionary, who comes wheezing into the smoking-room to announce that the "*dedjeunay* is hon the table," or that "Mr. 'Argrave's 'orse is hat the door," in a tone that might befit some venerable inquisitor pronouncing the last maledictions of his church over the body of its expiring victim. True, Hicklebury is a legacy from the past, handed down to John from my great-uncle's time; indeed both in dress and deportment, presenting not a few points of resemblance to that lamented alder-

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man ; but if filial piety and an amiable desire to retain an old domestic obliges him to keep Hicklebury, what can filial piety or sentiment of any sort have to say to his retaining, not only two stalwart footmen to assist him, but likewise the services of that magnificent gentleman known in the establishment as "Mr. 'Argrave's own man," whose duties, so far as I am able to ascertain them, seem to consist in lolling gracefully about the terrace outside the pantry door with a newspaper under his arm, or sauntering along the passage with one of the lighter accessories of John's wardrobe depending from the tips of his fingers. Considering that John is not in the least an ostentatious man, and cares less than most people about his dinner or the fit of his clothes, why he thinks it necessary to have three able-bodied individuals to hand him his cup of coffee and see that his shirts have been returned from the wash, is one of those mysteries which the contemplation of his fellow man is apt now and then to present to the philosophic mind.

Out of doors no less than in, the same system prevails. Hargrave rarely rides, and much

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more often walks than drives, yet his stable literally swarms with horses and their attendant stable-boys—sleek-headed, clean-limbed, rakish-looking youths, who seemed to bring the familiar aroma of their native mews into this orange-scented scene of their doubtless detested banishment. This portion of the establishment is reigned over by a bald, wizened, but not particularly elderly man, called by his master, William, but to every one else in the household known as Mr. Tummins. A highly agreeable individual is Mr. Tummins, and personally my favorite of the entire establishment. It is true that my ignorance of the objects under his care is deplorably manifest. This, however, he is good enough to overlook, or to pretend to do so, and in the golden leisure of his many unoccupied moments he has more than once favored me with his views upon a variety of valuable and interesting topics.

Latterly this leisure has been less absolute than heretofore, owing to the exactions of young Mr. Marmaduke Bonson, who has a lordly way of coming or sending up to the château and

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requesting the loan of this or that horse at the shortest possible notice. About a week before the time of which I am speaking he unfortunately discovered that the stable establishment there boasted of a set of four-in-hand harness, and that two of the pairs of horses had occasionally gone together, from which moment neither Hargrave nor any one else was allowed a moment's peace until the break was had out, the four horses harnessed to it, and he himself allowed to mount the box and exhibit himself to Algiers in the character of an accomplished Jehu.

Now, that my nerves are less to be depended upon than those of the generality of mankind, is a statement which I should be at once prepared to contradict. At the same time I do not mind admitting that to sit upon the slippery cushions of a break, behind four imperfectly-trained horses, driven by young Bonson down a precipitous road abounding in loose stones and other impediments, is considerably more of a trial than I at all care to subject them to! Upon the first and only occasion upon which I did accompany the party, how any of us ever

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returned home alive remains to this day a mystery to me. Even Hargrave, who is stolidity personified, showed, I thought, occasional symptoms of nervousness, and seemed preparing to assume the command whenever the crisis, never far off, became yet more imminent, while Tummins from behind kept up a continual warning note of, "Kindly, Master Bonson! Kindly, sir!" an enigmatical ejaculation which appeared to mean that Master Bonson was to avoid selecting the worst parts of the road for going faster on, and to endeavor, if possible, to resist running over more than three of the native population at a time! Finding, therefore, upon the afternoon which followed the dinner described in the last chapter that he was again to be indulged in this favorite pastime, I promptly excused myself, and as soon as the usual excitement of the start was over, I walked down to the villa El Hadjadj—so Mrs. Bonson's house was styled—to pay my promised visit to that lady's daughter, and to inspect the drawings.

It was a dull, dust-laden day. A sirocco had been blowing since early morning, causing all

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the doors and windows at the Château d'Oc to creak and moan portentously. Down in the town the dust-plague was maddening; the streets, guiltless of water-carts, being hidden under a dense yellow cloud rising and falling fitfully, now swooping in one direction and now in the other, as the hot, wild gusts harried it relentlessly hither and thither. On such a day that impression of dilapidation and shabbiness, always characteristic of the Bonson bower, became naturally even more marked than usual. No doubt a certain amount of Oriental *déshabille* and decrepitude would have been condoned and even welcomed by its owner as appropriate and interesting. Unfortunately English—essentially and perversely English—shabbiness seemed to me to exhale from the house and all its appurtenances. Genteel poverty, aristocratic indigence, appeared the one prevailing key-note, refusing absolutely to be eliminated by any devices that could be devised.

Entering the sitting-room—into which I was ushered by the same brown-faced youth in the same much down-trodden yellow slippers as

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before—I found Miss Bonson alone, and after a few minutes' conversation she proposed our adjourning into another room where her drawing and painting materials were kept, and accordingly led the way thither.

She had taken down a portfolio and placed the first of the sketches contained in it in my hand, when Mrs. Bonson entered, and I was obliged to rise and offer her my greetings.

"Ah, this is very nice! Hildegarde, I perceive, is showing you her paintings!" she said, glancing at her daughter with an air of compassionate grace. "No, no, not to me, do not please show it to *me*, I entreat of you," she added, averting her head as I was about to turn the one I held in my hand round for her inspection. "I am—my daughter herself will tell you so—a cruel, *cruel* critic; indeed I know it myself! I feel it! I often say that no amateur's work should ever under any circumstances be shown to me. My eyes are terrible! They pounce upon every defect; no blemish—even the smallest—can escape their scrutiny; the least flaw, the slightest lack of harmony is at once fatal to my enjoyment, affection itself

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being powerless to blind me to deficiencies, and when I see them I am miserable; my conscience gives me not a moment's rest until I have pointed them out!"

"I am always glad, I think, to have my faults shown to me, mamma," Miss Bonson said patiently.

"Possibly, my love, but to do so—to express, so to speak, the cause of one's own anguish—is, as I have frequently endeavored to explain to you, necessarily harrowing to one truly penetrated with the love of beauty. Why, then, should you wish me to inflict upon myself such unnecessary torture? Art," continued Mrs. Bonson, sinking gracefully into the chair which had been placed for her, "art presents itself often to my mind in the light of a siren—lovely but devouring—a sort of divine monster—all engrossing, all consuming—she demands every thing from her votaries; their time, their life, their very *souls*. There can be no half-heartedness, no partial measure in her service; it must be either all or nothing."

"I am quite willing for my part that it should be all," her daughter answered quietly.

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"And when," continued Mrs. Bonson without seemingly heeding the interpolation, but with a distinct increase of emphasis, "when such devotion as this is impossible; when social circumstances forbid that we should thus devote ourselves absolutely to her service—then it seems to me that the more fitting part is for us to fold our hands; to rest content with the labors of others; with the beautiful around us; with nature; with the glorious and immortal traditions of the past; not to endeavor ourselves to break into her sanctuary; not with rash and untaught hands to profane her shrine. Such has always been at least my own creed, but then I am, I confess it, an enthusiast; some people might even say a *visionary*," and Mrs. Bonson shut her eyes gently as if to shut out the view of any such rash and ill-judging people.

I glanced at her daughter, wondering how she was affected by these truly magnificent sentiments; wondering too that in so paralyzing an atmosphere she had been able to make any struggle toward art training at all, the more so that her own efforts, if not without some feeling for that beauty about which her

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mother raved so surprisingly, clearly displayed no very overmastering talent, such as alone might be supposed to be able to make any headway against such a desperate, and, to all appearances, perennial flow of sonorosity.

Rousing herself presently from the sort of æsthetic trance into which she appeared to have fallen, Mrs. Bonson proposed an adjournment to the garden, alleging that there was a fountain there which she had neglected to point out to me upon the previous occasion, and which it would be a regrettible thing for me to leave Algiers without inspecting. I expected Miss Bonson to demur to this proposal, seeing that I had been invited to the house specially to look at her drawings, and that as yet only a small portion of the portfolio had been passed in review. I was wrong, however. Instead of doing so she simply replaced the few sketches and studies which had been already taken from that receptacle; shut it, and tied the strings which confined its sides; which done she replaced it in its former position against the wall, and herself led the way into the adjoining room.

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The sun being hot, Mrs. Bonson did not proceed further than the door-step, from which post she directed her daughter to the particular points to which she wished my attention called. When reached, the fountain proved to be of a very ordinary Algerian pattern; the water having been originally conveyed from one tank to another in a series of small snake-like flutings which meandered sinuously about over the marble floor. There was a similar one, I knew, in Hargrave's garden, and I had seen others elsewhere, the chief distinguishing characteristic of the present specimen being its high degree of dilapidation, mosses and lichens, evidently the growth of years, having so choked the channels as entirely to hinder the water from flowing, a circumstance which was of the less consequence seeing that this consummation had been already effectually prevented by the leaking of the tank from which it was intended to draw its supplies.

Not finding any thing to say concerning it on my return, I diverted Mrs. Bonson's attention by admiring a small but well-tended border of shrubs and flowers which stretched for

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some little distance before the house, contrasting with the forlorn and slovenly condition of the rest of the garden.

"Ah, yes, that is Hildegarde's little plot," she said, glancing toward her daughter, who had lingered behind to tie up a heliotrope which had escaped from its peg in the recent storm. "In that humble little border, Mr. Bell," the lady continued, sinking her voice impressively, "you see the nucleus—the modest little parent, I may say—of all those elaborate and gorgeous parterres with which your cousin has so lavishly embellished his grounds. It was his appreciation of what he saw here, in this retired little home of ours, far from the world and its noisy joys, which first turned his attention to the cultivation of those floral treasures for which this country, as you are doubtless aware, is justly celebrated."

She paused, and gazed vacantly, yet not, I fancied, unscrutinizingly into my face.

"I am sure he has every reason to be obliged to you," I said vaguely, not indeed knowing what else I was expected to say.

"So he himself would be the first to con-

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cede," Mrs. Bonson replied sweetly. "Mr. Hargrave is the *last* man to borrow without acknowledgment. It is not always so, I am sorry to say," she added plaintively. "I have known ideas, thought out, not without some little pains here, unceremoniously adopted, plagiarized without a word of recognition or gratitude, and being carried out on a larger scale, with the aid of appliances impossible to one of my sadly restricted means, to have never, even at the very last, been recognized as what they were."

"Indeed, that was hard," I said, more and more at a loss how to perform my part appropriately in this dialogue.

Mrs. Bonson sighed. "I need not tell you, I am sure, that *I* made no effort to reclaim my own property," she said gently. "If others did not care to acknowledge their obligations why should I desire to force them? I fold my hands instead, I retire into my little shell, I am content with my own consciousness of the facts. Indeed, upon more than one occasion, I must own to you, that the child of my own fancy—the first delicate fanciful conceit—has

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in other hands become so vulgarized, so overlaid with coarse and unnecessary additions, that I have almost hesitated to recognize my own offspring. The tendency of wealth, Mr. Bell," the lady continued impressively, "is coarseness. It enlarges, it, I may say, brutalizes every thing that it lays its hands upon."

"Ah, perhaps so. Very likely you are right," I said, feeling myself becoming rapidly idiotic under this protracted ordeal.

"At the same time," Mrs. Bonson continued, holding aloft one long blue-ringed finger to emphasize her meaning, "I would not have you to understand that I object to wealth always, or under all circumstances—far from it. To do so would be to show myself narrow-minded and prejudiced. Well directed the mission of wealth is enormous. In the field of art alone it is, we may say, incalculable! Here, for instance, in Algiers, we can see what it has done. The Algerine, whose home we are occupying, whose heritage we may be said to have entered upon was often, as you are doubtless aware, a man of vast wealth; but how differently, ah! how very differently, did *he*

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employ his abundance to others that might be mentioned! Sometimes," Mrs. Bonson continued plaintively, "I shut my eyes and fancy myself back again here in those past days. I see this very house as it then existed; I see its Moorish owner; I can almost hear his tread as he moves about among his hushed and bowed retainers. Then I open them again, but alas! the vision has flown!"

"Do you think you really would have enjoyed it if you had been here?" I inquired. "Remember that you wouldn't have been sitting out here enjoying the sunshine as you are now. You would have been shut away somewhere in a dark room, behind grated windows; put under lock and key like a necklace or an expensive piece of furniture, a very valuable thing, no doubt, but no more belonging to itself than any of those chairs and tables there do."

Mrs. Bonson did not seem to relish this prosaic view of the matter.

"That, I am aware, is the common conception," she said coldly. "The side of Islamism which has been presented to the world by its enemies and detractors. It is only those who

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have *lived* in it, who know it from the inside, that can speak authoritatively as to what it is. Whatever may be said to the contrary, you may take my word for it, that there is a great deal, a *very* great deal of good in Mahometanism," she added solemnly.

At this juncture I rose to take my leave, wondering rather as I did so what the Moor of her imaginations would have thought of Mrs. Bonson's style of conversation, and whether among the resources of his domestic legislation some very effectual means would not have been found to put a check upon its truly portentous flow! Having cut my farewell as short as possible, I approached Miss Bonson, who, during the whole of the latter part of the dialogue had remained at some little distance apart, intent upon her gardening operations.

"You will let me see the rest of your drawings another time, won't you?" I said, as we shook hands.

"Certainly, if you care to do so," she answered. "I should be very glad, in fact, to have your opinion about them. I know so few artists."

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She took off the gardening gloves she had assumed, and walked beside me toward the gate leading to the high road.

"I wish for your sake you knew a better one in me then," I replied, with more gallantry, perhaps, than ingenuousness.

"You are quite good enough, probably, to measure the depth of my shortcomings," she answered, rather curtly. "I sometimes wonder whether it is not too late," she went on, "whether I am not too old ever to study art seriously—to take it up, I mean, as a vocation. Should you say yourself that I was too old?" she continued, scanning my face scrutinizingly as if to extort a truthful reply.

"Too old, my dear Miss Bonson, what an idea!" I exclaimed, struck by the discrepancy between the question and the youthful, brilliant beauty which confronted me. "How could you possibly be too old for any thing?"

"I am twenty; that is old for a student, is it not, for a beginner?" she said simply. "You told me yourself, the other day, that you began before you were ten. Of course I have worked

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alone, but very likely that would not count for much; probably I should have as much to unlearn as to learn. That is what is hard," she went on with a sigh; "to work, and feel that you have worked for nothing: that it would have been better, perhaps, if you had been idle."

"Where did you think of going to study?" I inquired, evading the question as to her age, for, preposterous as it was in one sense, in another—that in which she meant it—it no doubt was true; she was rather old to start upon that most arduous of tracks which more, perhaps, than most others requires the best energies, the first fresh adaptabilities of youth.

"To London. I have an aunt there—a sister of my father's—who would let me stay with her while I was learning."

Mrs. Bonson had by this time gone indoors, and we were proceeding side by side along the walk which led to the gate.

"My mother does not like the idea," Miss Bonson went on gravely. "She thinks that it is—not of course a derogation, she would not

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think that, but an uncalled-for step on my part—that I should be better at home. But it seems to me that there are some things about which one must judge for one's self. We are not rich, every one can see that, so there need be no concealment about it, and when that is the case it is a person's duty to work if they can."

"Your brother does not seem to see the matter in that light," I could not resist saying.

"No, he does not; but then you must remember he is not strong," she answered quickly. "I do not think that he would ever be able to work at any profession in England, the climate would never suit him; whereas I, on the contrary, am very strong. Besides I really like work, and I am not at all afraid of it. And when one is not rich one *must* work," she repeated insistently, as if the fact of finding ears to which she might uncontradicted express that sentiment was in itself a relief.

We had by this time reached the gate, and were looking over it on to the road. As usual at this hour of the afternoon, the latter was filled with a labyrinthine crowd of equipages

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of all sorts, sizes, and conditions. Smart-looking phaetons belonging generally to the more well-to-do of the local officials—gentlemen in tight kid gloves, who sat spruce and stiff beside effectively attired ladies reclining consciously upon their cushions; shabby *fiacres* packed with disheveled tourists fresh from the steamboats and Europe; a diligence bound for El Biar, its top covered with white-robed Arabs, their dark bearded faces lifted impassively above the crowd; a cart piled with brown earth, on the top of which a negro, with a scarlet blanket around his shoulders, sat munching oranges out of a basket which he held between his knees.

All these various conveyances and their various freights passed us by in motley succession, mixed up with the usual running accompaniment of donkeys and donkey-boys, besides foot-passengers of both sexes, and some six or seven nationalities. Presently the toot of a coaching-horn was heard in the distance, and a few minutes after Hargrave's break appeared in sight, driven by the elated Marmaduke, who sat aloft in state, his mentor Tummins from be-

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hind keeping a watchful eye upon his proceedings. Hargrave saw us, and took off his hat to Miss Bonson as he passed, who on her side responded with a bow and a flush, following the break with her eyes until it vanished out of sight. There was something suggestive and dramatic, I thought, in this sudden apparition following so closely upon my companion's recent sentiments, an idea which may have occurred to her also, for she turned back almost immediately afterward from the gate, while I pursued my way homeward up the hill.

I was in no particular hurry about returning to the château, but as it was still hot and dusty, I got into one of those passing omnibuses which discharge their passengers about half-way up the ascent, after leaving which I was leisurely mounting the road when young Bonson passed upon the opposite footpath without apparently seeing me, and hurried down in the direction I had just left.

"You contrived to get rid of your charioteer remarkably early to-day," I said to John, whom I found standing at his own hall door.

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"I met him tearing down hill just now like a maniac."

"Yes, I know, I have been a fool," he said with an air of vexation. "He has been plaguing me for the last week, as you know, to take him to L'Aghouat, and this afternoon—half an hour ago in fact—purely to get rid of him, I said yes, I would, on one condition, not dreaming for a minute that he would try to put it into execution; and almost before the words were out of my mouth he tore away home, as you saw."

"To ask his mamma's permission?" I said, inquiringly, seeing that he hesitated.

"Yes, that—and, well, something else besides. However, there's no use in talking about it, as of course it will come to nothing," and he turned abruptly away in the direction of the orangery.

I was rather puzzled, but was not very long left to speculate as to his meaning, for about an hour after, as we were just going to dress for dinner, the door opened, and young Bonson burst in upon us like a tornado.

"All right, Hargrave; yes, she says she'll

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go! Now, you won't back out of it, will you? You can't after that!" he shouted.

John got up from his chair, looking more excited than I had ever, I think, seen him look before.

"Are you sure of what you are saying, Bonson? Did your sister *really* say that she would come too?" he said quickly. "Be certain. Probably you are making a mistake?"

"A mistake? Nothing of the sort. At first, you know, of course, she hummed and hawed a bit; girls always do; but my mother joined in and said she'd better go; and I—well, I told her she had better go too," the young man admitted ingenuously; "so at last she said all right she would, and that I could tell you so."

Hargrave still looked any thing but satisfied.

"I am certain that you've tormented her into it, and that she has simply sacrificed herself to please you," he said in a tone of vexation.

"No, I tell you—nothing of the sort. Give you my word and honor, Hargrave, I never

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tormented her a bit, not an atom. She'd be as much disappointed as any of us now, you may take your oath of that, if you were to back out of it," he added, evidently by way of clinching the matter.

"I have not the least wish to back out," John said coldly. "I only wish to make sure that your sister is not a victim in the matter."

"Well, then, that's all right, since I tell you she's not. And it's just the time of year for L'Aghouat too. Those two fellows at the Hôtel d'Orient went last month, and said they'd no end of a lark. We'll take the break too, won't we, Hargrave?" he continued confidently.

"We shall do nothing of the sort," John said decidedly. "It would be utterly unsafe; the roads are not fit for it. It would be impossible, too, to get relays of horses. The thing, in short, is out of the question. If we go at all, we go in the wagonette."

Marmaduke's face fell, while mine probably as visibly rose. It was evident that he had been inflating himself with a beautiful vision of his own achievements as a charioteer; conducting four horses with *éclat* over the passes

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of the Atlas Mountains, amid the loud tooting of the horn, and the excited shouts of an enraptured population, and the idea was far too glorious to be relinquished without a pang.

"Stuff!" he said sullenly. "There are any number of horses to be had, you may be sure, if you only choose to pay for them. It will be awfully slow work poking about in that stupid old wagonette like any common tourists. I don't see any particular sense in our going at all if we don't take the break."

"Very well, then, we need *not* go at all," Hargrave said, quietly. "Probably your sister will be able to reconcile herself to the deprivation," he added significantly.

Whether this was the case or not, it immediately became evident that her brother would not; and he began promptly persecuting Hargrave definitely to fix the day, so that there might be no possible danger of any further hitch. Little as I liked the inspiration under which the expedition was set on foot, I was not ill pleased at the notion. I had seen nothing as yet of the country, excepting in the immediate neighborhood of Algiers; and to go for

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an expedition of a week or ten days, to cross the Atlas, to get glimpses perhaps of the Sahara, at all events to see Arab life under new combinations and more favorable conditions than I had yet done, was an idea that could hardly fail to smile upon a man and a painter, whose opportunities for any thing of the sort had been of the scantiest. Before separating that evening, therefore, it was decided that the expedition should take place, weather permitting, upon the following Tuesday week.

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CHAPTER VI.

WE START FOR THE ATLAS MOUNTAINS.

AFTER this young Bonson pervaded the château more steadily than ever. At no hour, in fact, day or night, did we seem safe from his persistent presence. He would arrive shortly after breakfast, and it was midnight often before he could be gently ejected from the door. How Hargrave put up with his exactions, or why the servants did not threaten to leave in a body was more than I could ever understand. Personally I must own that his company was such an unspeakable irritation, that I got into the habit of leaving the house whenever I had reason to think that he was likely to appear. Seeing, therefore, one afternoon shortly before our excursion to L'Aghouat took place, that the inevitable visitor was approaching up the avenue, I let myself out by the gate at the end of the garden, and having

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descended to the bottom of the hill and crossed the railway I started for a saunter along the shore.

Fashion, which disports itself considerably upon the upper slopes of Mustapha, has never apparently as yet thought of discovering this region, and nothing can be more solitary than is its entire length. Once the intermediate belt of tamarisk-covered ground which divides it from the road is past you may wander for miles without meeting living creature; the long green point of Cap Matifou which ends the bay, an occasional brown or gray backed-rock emerging bluntly from the sand, a gull careering overhead, the white streak of a lateen sail, or sooty slur of a steamer upon the sweeps of blue, being all the company and distraction you are liable to encounter. On this particular morning it had been blowing hard, and the sands were embellished with elaborate flounces and furbelows careering in white succession along their margins. Chancing to look back along the way I had come, I observed rather to my surprise a small group of people making their way over the yellow expanse

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apparently in my direction. Wondering who the very unusual promenaders could be I changed my course so as to approach nearer to the group, when I discovered it to consist of my elderly acquaintance, Mme. de la Hoche, toiling heroically along with the aid of a large stick, of one of her little granddaughters mounted upon a tall horse and apparently any thing but happy in that position, of a groom also mounted, and of a servant laden with a camp-stool and other paraphernalia who followed in the rear.

"You don't mean to say that this is any one I have the honor to be acquainted with?" the old lady inquired, as I advanced with a bow to meet them. "This indeed is an adventure! I was not aware that any body but myself ever came here. Now, my dear, you can ride on, but don't go beyond the next point"—this to her granddaughter—"and do, for Heaven's sake try not to fall off," she added pathetically, as that little personage rather reluctantly obeyed. "It is all their father's fault, he will insist that they should learn to ride!" the old lady continued in the same plaintive tone to me. "He

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is a perfect Anglophile—rabid about field sports, and every thing else of the sort. Where he gets his English instincts from Heaven alone knows, not certainly from *me*—nobody can accuse *me* of any besotted admiration for the ways of my own countrymen. At any rate, now that my daughter-in-law, who was a remarkably sensible person, is dead, and that the children have come home from their convent, he suddenly discovers that they are ruined—that their education has been a mistake, that they are unfit to lead a natural existence, that they are silly, nervous—I can not tell you what all—and by way of corrective to this terrible list of enormities orders the poor children, among other violent recreations, to be taught to ride—an art not included in the list of the Sacré Cœur accomplishments! As it happens, they detest the exercise, and I detest it for them. They have about as much notion of how to sit on horseback as two white kittens, and the consequence is they are always tumbling off and being brought in with their poor little faces scratched from knocking them against the stones on the roads. As a com-

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promise, therefore, I insist that, if they *must* ride, they shall ride down here on the sands, where they are less likely at least to kill themselves, or to break any of their arms and legs. I don't—between ourselves—believe that my son is half pleased at the change. His great idea is to harden them—have them turned into a pair of Di Vernons, or Kate Coventrys, or whoever the latest feminine embodiment of the sporting ideal may be. It is quite vainly that I point out to him that they are not English girls as it happens, but French ones; that all the hardening in the world will not make them otherwise; that if it could the result would be that they would be ridiculous hybrids, without the merits which are to be acquired under either system. But no, I talk to the winds! I am an old woman, I have not kept pace with modern lights, I have lived so long in France that I have got infected with its unnatural ways of looking at things, I am bigoted, conventional, etc., etc.! So Monsieur mon fils evidently thinks, though he is too polite to inform me of it in so many words! Now, therefore, I hold my tongue, and drive down

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here to comfort my poor little victims while they are undergoing their riding penances, though how much I enjoy toiling through this sand, which gets into my shoes and gives me separate pains in each of my old bones, I leave you, my dear sir, to suppose. However, this is not a particularly diverting topic for you, so let us talk of something else. And, to begin with, tell me about your cousin. How is he? and how are our matrimonial schemes for his benefit progressing?"

"Why, excellently!" I answered. "Perhaps you haven't heard that Miss Bonson is going to L'Aghouat with us next week at Hargrave's particular invitation?"

"Going to L'Aghouat?" Madame de la Hoche stopped short in her laborious progression, and turned to look me in the face. "Who do I understand you to say is going to L'Aghouat?" she inquired.

"Miss Bonson, also her brother, also myself, also, of course, Hargrave."

"Well, go on."

"Where do you wish me to go to?" I asked smiling.

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"Who else is going to L'Aghouat?"

"No one else, I think."

"Not Mrs. Bonson?"

"No, not certainly Mrs. Bonson."

"Nor any other lady?"

"Nor yet any other lady that I am aware of."

Madame de la Hoche beckoned to her servant to approach with the camp-stool, and sat down as if the information was too overwhelming to be received in any other posture.

"Do you mean to tell me, seriously, that Mrs. Bonson is sending her daughter all the way to L'Aghouat alone with you three young men?" she inquired in a tone of incredulity bordering closely upon awe.

"One of the three young men in question being her brother," I suggested laughing.

"Yes, her brother; and such a brother! About as fit to have the charge of a young girl as one of those gulls up there!"

"Besides, you would hardly call Hargrave a very young man," I pursued. "Of course Mrs. Bonson knows that her daughter is safe under his charge."

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"Safe! Now do you think I suppose he would let her pocket be picked? I never heard of any thing so improper in the whole course of my existence—never!"

"Improper! my dear Madame de la Hoche," I said remonstratingly. "Why, what impropriety can there be? We are not monsters, that a young lady should come to any harm in our company, are we?"

"I never said that you were monsters, my dear sir. It is not a question of what you are, or what you are not. You may be angels for any thing I know to the contrary; very possibly you are, but there are certain decorums which society demands, and the breach of which, let me inform you as an old woman that knows the world, it rarely, if ever, pardons. And for a young lady, an unmarried girl—but there, the thing does not need dwelling upon! Its impropriety is upon the surface; it rushes to meet one!"

"You must not suppose that Miss Bonson herself had any thing to say to the scheme," I said. "Her brother has been persecuting Hargrave for weeks to take him, and at last he

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agreed, on condition of his sister also joining the party, not for a moment dreaming that there was a chance of her doing so, and rather to our surprise he came back the same evening announcing that she had consented to do so."

"Yes, yes, yes, one sees through all that perfectly! Probably the little monster threatened to run away, or jump over the pier into the sea, if he didn't get his own way. He would be capable of saying that or any thing else to serve his own ends, and of course she, poor girl, was only too anxious to oblige him, lest he should proceed to put his precious threat into execution."

"Well then, since it is not her you blame, I hope it is not us?" I inquired, laughing. "Surely you would hardly expect Hargrave and myself to object very strenuously upon the score of propriety, would you?"

"Certainly not you, my dear young man. No one in their senses would expect any thing of the sort from *you!* As for Mr. Hargrave, well, yes, I own I am rather disappointed; I should have thought that he would himself have felt the indecorum of proposing any thing

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so outrageous. Of course there is only one person really to blame though, and that is the girl's own mother. Her conduct is incredible, or would at least be incredible were she other than she is."

"I suppose her motives are hardly to be called inscrutable?" I observed dryly.

"Inscrutable? Of course not. It is just that which makes it so atrocious. No doubt she calculates upon the expedition to throw your cousin and her daughter together. And, no doubt, it is just the sort of idiotic scheme that *would* commend itself to an intelligence like hers. As if any one with a grain of sense in her head could not see that it was one of the best ways possible to defeat that very object."

"You think so really?" I said eagerly.

"I think that it is—just as likely to do that as any thing else. However, for her own sake, all I can say is, I only hope Miss Bonson *will* see the necessity after this of accepting your cousin. If she does not . . ." and Madame de la Hoche made an upward and outward gesture with her hands which seemed to imply

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that the consequences in that case were more than she or any one else could venture to predict.

The riders were by this time returning, so, rising from her seat, the old lady hobbled forward a few steps to meet them. Then, having satisfactorily ascertained that no serious casualty had upon this occasion occurred, she turned and retraced her steps toward the carriage, which all this time had been waiting for her at the nearest corner of the road.

I accompanied her thither, and endeavored to turn the conversation into fresh and more agreeable channels; but Madame de la Hoche was not to be mollified, evidently, despite her protestations to the contrary, including me in that unqualified disapproval with which she regarded this heinously reprehensible expedition of ours. After we had parted and I was on my way home, I found myself more than once smiling over her vehement denunciations, wondering too, as I did so, whether she might not think herself called upon to take some steps to bring those very decided views of hers to bear upon the situation. This however, ap-

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parently, she refrained from doing; at all events, the days passed on, and no announcement of any change of plans emanated from the other side. Young Bonson pervaded the house more and more, until I began to wonder why he refrained from taking up his abode in it altogether. Miss Bonson, on the other hand, remained during the same period absolutely invisible. Twice I called at the villa El Hadjadj, in hopes of being permitted to see the rest of the portfolio, but on each occasion was denied access. When the day appointed for our expedition at last arrived, Hargrave dispatched a servant early in the morning to secure rooms, and to convey his and my luggage, leaving the not superfluous space in the wagonette free for that of the remaining travelers; and a little before eleven o'clock—the hour agreed upon for our start—we took our places in that conveyance, and drove down the long hill and up the short ascent leading to Mrs. Bonson's door.

As that aperture proved to be hospitably open, there was no occasion for us to ring, and accordingly we sat patiently in the sunshine,

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while a confused hubbub of opening and shutting doors, running up and down stairs, pulling about of trunks, and such-like notes of preparation were making themselves audible overhead.

The first to appear was Miss Bonson, who apologized formally for her brother's non-appearance, "he had been out rather late the night before," she said, "but would not be long now." She wore on this occasion a closely-fitting brown traveling dress which suited her admirably, and looked strikingly handsome, but though she carried a small bag in one hand, and a railway rug over her arm, her expression was wanting in that look of alert preparation which might seem to befit the occasion. On the contrary, there was an air of constraint about her which I had not observed previously, and which I could see produced its effect upon Hargrave, who, at sight of her, had sprung down, and advanced to relieve her of her various burdens.

The sun was blazing; the two dusty-leaved acacias which stood on either side of the door offering the least efficient protection against its

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rays. It was by far the hottest day since my arrival in Algiers, with something of electrical oppressiveness in the tension of the air, and in the brooding glow of the landscape, the precipitous line of rocks which ridge in the western side of the Mustapha slope showing a red and heated surface above the pallid foliage.

When at length Marmaduke appeared, followed by his mamma, his appearance fully corroborated his sister's account of the cause of his previous delay. Mrs. Bonson—who wore a diaphanous black garment with a great many ponderous silver bangles, which clanked metallically when she moved—undulated around her son, waving her jeweled fingers, and appealing now to him, and now to Hargrave upon his behalf: "You *will* not let him exhaust himself, will you, dear Mr. Hargrave?" she exclaimed, pleadingly. "I may *trust* you, may I not? *Promise* me that you will never allow him to remain in the sun even for a single instant? He is so careless about himself; so shockingly thoughtless; young men, I suppose *are*. I have made him get a sun helmet, as you see, but at best they are, in my opinion, but a

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very inefficient preservative against the climate. Now a turban——"

The horses were by this time beginning to grow restless; Miss Bonson had already mounted to her own place; the luggage was being stowed away wherever it could be induced to go, one apoplectic portmanteau, the property of Marmaduke, which declined to go anywhere else, having to be deposited, to every one's inconvenience, upon the seat. The brown-faced domestic ran to open the lower gate of the garden; young Bonson wriggled himself away from his affectionate parent's embrace; Hargrave hastily promised any thing and every thing that was required of him; the wheels crunched over the neglected gravel, and we were at last off, speeding over the main route, then along a narrower and less frequented road, which took us up and down that long succession of slopes which leads the wayfarer from the Sahhel to the plains.

Looking back from the top of our first declivity, the town rose dazzlingly behind us, the serried walls of the old pirate citadel, innocent at this distance of any taint of dirt or decadence,

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lifting their snowy ridges against the thirsty hills. A warm breeze was blowing; the ships in the harbor seemed to be rocking gently to and fro, as they lay at anchor. For an instant the whole vividly-tinted panorama—the villa-haunted slopes of Mustapha, the town with its quays, the harbor thrusting gray arms squarely into the sea, the sea itself with its scattered population of boats—all stood out with the distinctness of a vision. The next a corner was turned; we had shot down the first long steep slope; city, harbor, sea had all vanished, replaced by the lonely greenness of the hill-side; by grotesque companies of cactuses; by sturdy much-contorted palmettos and long glaucous processions of aloes, leading away into the distance, with here and there the candelabra-like skeleton of last year's blossom rising sentinel-fashion along the line.

It was pretty cool, as long as we remained upon the Sahhel, but as we descended deeper and deeper the heat increased; the breeze vanished with the vanishing sight of the sea; hot, mist-laden exhalations rose from the more swampy parts of the plain. Hardly any people

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seemed at work, and except the sharp click of the horses' feet, and the rattle of the wheels, a silence gathered round us that was oppressive. With us, too, conversation languished. Now and then Hargrave would call attention to some of the objects we were passing, or Marmaduke, from under the shelter of his helmet, would growl out a discontented ejaculation against the heat. Miss Bonson sat wrapped in the sort of silent reserve with which she had started on this, so far not, it must be owned, very happily inaugurated expedition, and was not to be induced to emerge from it. To me certainly, and to all of us, I think, it seemed a very long time before the mountains for which we were making began to approach a single inch nearer. By the time we stopped at Boufaric, however, their veiled grayness had grown into something like distinctness, and over the nearer slopes we could see the water-worn channels diverging hither and thither in all directions, like the veins upon an aged hand.

Here, under the shade of the trees which line the road, the heat to some degree lost its hold, and we lingered so long that it was already six

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o'clock by the time we reached Blidah, the place where our first night's halt was to be made. The last hour had been cloudy, and as we rattled over the ill-paved street and drew up at our hotel, a sullen mutter of thunder was going on overhead, mingling with the noise of voices, and the braying of a military band, sounds strange to us after our twenty miles of silence and isolation. Dinner over, we sauntered into the square, where it was proposed that I should be taken to see such sights as were to be seen. As we were about to start with this intention, Hargrave's groom came up and asked to speak to him, and accordingly he turned back to the hotel, begging us to wait, as he would return in a minute.

Having waited about ten times that period, and finding that he did not reappear, we sauntered on along a couple of streets, sparsely lighted by stray twinkling lights, where the clink of a spurred boot or the muffled, slipshod shuffling of slippers alone revealed the nationality of the passer-by. Blidah people appear to keep astonishingly early hours; although it was now only nine o'clock nearly

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every body seemed abed. Guided, however, by the twanging of some stringed instrument and the intermittent thumping of a tomtom, we presently halted before a curtain which hung in front of a doorway, and on either side of which the light streamed invitingly.

Marmaduke twitched the curtain a little aside, and through the chink so made his sister and I could to some extent see what was taking place inside. Apparently some sort of concert was progressing. We could see a platform and a man upon it, who appeared to be reciting some song or chant to the monotonous accompaniment of the instrument which he held in his hands.

Young Bonson, with whom patience was not a marked characteristic, soon grew tired of his office of curtain-holder.

"You'd better go in if you're so deuced anxious to know what they're at," he said impatiently. "I can't go on holding this great lumbering thing all night, you know."

He pulled the curtain suddenly aside as he spoke, so that Miss Bonson, who was standing nearest to it, almost involuntarily made a step

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forward; I followed, and we found ourselves inside.

It was a very ordinary Café Maure. A number of men, smoking and drinking coffee, were sitting at small tables, or reposing on couches ranged around the walls. Besides the man we had already seen, a couple of Mauresque women, unveiled and rouged, were sitting upon the platform, shaking and thumping their drums in an intermittent, and, as it seemed to us, perfectly irrelevant accompaniment to his strains; a big paraffine lamp, which swung just above where we were standing, lighting up the not very brilliant or inthralling scene.

Nothing, I am bound to say, could have been more absolutely decorous than the manner of most of the assembled guests. One or two Arabs slightly turned their heads in our direction, the greater number exhibiting only by the additional rigidity of their attitudes the consciousness of any unusual intrusion. An unpleasant little Frenchman, however, who happened to be sitting on one of the nearest benches, turned round, thrusting his ugly grimacing little countenance almost under Miss

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Bonson's hat, while the man on the platform—animated apparently by our presence—suddenly burst into a louder strain, wagging his head and tossing his instrument from side to side in time to his melody.

I have since been told that these songs are invariably hideously improper, but considering the language in which it was couched and the pace at which it was sung, it might have been the Ten Commandments, or a page of the Koran, or any thing else of the kind, for aught I, or probably any of our party, could tell to the contrary. Our curiosity satisfied, we were upon the point of retreating when the curtain was again pulled aside and Hargrave entered.

Then, for the first time, it was that I realized that Hargrave had a temper. Never, I think, before or since, have I seen a man look so angry. He was positively inarticulate with fury, his usually ruddy complexion white for the moment with suppressed rage. Holding the curtain widely open, he signaled imperiously to us to pass out, an order which, under the circumstances, it would have required some courage to resist, and another

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moment saw us all four standing in the empty street.

Then, like a lion, he turned upon the hapless Marmaduke.

"How dare you take your sister into such a place, sir?" he thundered, towering over that puny youth as if about to annihilate him in his wrath.

"But I assure you, Hargrave—upon my soul and honor I assure you—I never took her at all," the injured Marmaduke almost whimpered. "She went in of her own accord—quite of her own accord. Didn't you, Hildegarde?"

"Certainly I went in of my own accord," Miss Bonson corroborated, in a different tone. "And what if I did, Mr. Hargrave?"

John's anger collapsed almost as suddenly as it had arisen.

"I beg your pardon," he answered meekly, "but please believe me when I say it was *not* a fit place for you to go to—it was not indeed. Your brother does not know. Pray, in any similar case be guided by me in future," he added, entreatingly.

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Miss Bonson continued to frown, but her frown lost its severity; an odd expression, half puzzled, half offended, yet not, as it seemed, entirely displeased, crossing her face. She appeared to be upon the point of speaking again. Suddenly, however, she changed her mind, and turning abruptly away, walked rapidly in the direction of the hotel and we three followed silently. Arrived there, she disappeared at once to her own room, while Hargrave, whose wrath evidently burned nearly as hotly against me as against Bonson, silently lighted his candle and departed almost immediately after in the opposite direction, leaving that young gentleman and myself to entertain each other. And so ended the first evening of our pleasure excursion!

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CHAPTER VII.

AFRICAN SNOW, AND ITS EFFECTS UPON THE TEMPER.

IT had been settled before leaving Algiers that we were to make an early start from Blidah next morning so as to give ourselves as long a time as possible for exploring the famous gorge of Chiffa, the first cynosure, it seems, of every Algerian sight-seer. Unfortunately, as we learned from Hargrave at breakfast-time, one of his horses had lamed itself in the course of the previous day's journey, which had been the cause, we also learned, of his own detention overnight. It being too late now to send back to Algiers for one to supply its place, he had decided, he told us, upon returning them at once to their own stable and hiring another pair at Blidah instead of at Medeah as at first intended. Upon hearing of the casualty Miss Bonson at once suggested

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that the expedition should be given up, and that we should return to Algiers, but the suggestion was so decidedly negatived by the rest of the party, and most loudly of all by her brother, that she agreed to withdraw the suggestion, and to take her place as before in the wagonette, which shortly after nine o'clock appeared at the door.

It had rained heavily in the night, but was now calm and clear. Looking back as we left Blidah its chimneys seemed all sending their smoke directly heavenward. Among the fresher foliage the scattered cypresses upon the hill-sides lifted themselves conspicuously; blocks of yellow sandstone, fallen from the ridges, lay in crumbling ruin by the roadside; between the sun-baked blocks we could see into recesses where small ferns and flowers had hidden themselves from the dust and glare. The river gleamed between its banks; here and there clumps of oleanders showed their long wet leaves as yet unadorned with flowers. In the neighborhood of Blidah groves of orange trees paraded their richness to the passers-by. The whole world looked fresh, young, rejoic-

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ing. Upon us, too, the morning's harmonies were doing their work. By a sort of common consent the evening's differences remained plunged in oblivion, and by the time we had turned our first corner, and entered upon that magnificent road which is the pride of Algerian engineering, the serenity which lay so conspicuously upon the mountains was less absolutely foreign to our feelings than might have seemed possible a few hours before.

Like most places in the neighborhood of Algiers, the Chiffa gorge presents to the inquiring stranger a finely assorted mixture of contending and contrasting nationalities. Herds of sheep driven by half-savage Berbers and Kabyles—sheep and shepherds alike yellow with the all-pervading sand of the desert—flocked past us in tumultuous confusion, followed at a little interval by a party of tourists carrying their luncheon-baskets, and these in their turn by a depressed family of colonists walking beside the vehicle which was conveying their properties to newer, and it was to be hoped from their expressions, more prosperous quarters. The great feature of the place, the

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famous Barbary ape, whose unique presence is supposed to confer special distinction upon this mountain gorge, remained on this occasion, as I have learned from other travelers it generally does remain, conspicuous by its absence. Having craned our necks for some time in a vain search for this distinguished animal, and beguiled ourselves with sundry illusory appearances, we gave the matter up in despair, and drove briskly on under red-tinged rocks, and round one sharp-elbowed turn after another, until we emerged into the open region above.

Here for the first time the upland aspect of affairs began to declare itself. The effete vegetation of the plains was replaced by sturdy oaks and much enduring thujas. Grass, green as on a mountain alp, filled all the little hollows and puckers of the slopes. The river, as yet uncaught in the embraces of the rocks, ran free, joined from time to time by smaller tributaries slipping down from one or other of the lateral valleys. Up one of these Hargrave pointed out groups of skin-covered huts or "gourbis," clustered together along the edge of the water—foul, repulsive-looking habita-

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tions which the very sun itself seemed only to smite into additional uncleanness. At the place we stopped to lunch a company of Spahis on their way south were camping out, their horses, still carrying the red, high-peaked saddles, being picketed effectively about among the grass and brushwood, while their swarthy riders regaled themselves with copious libations of red wine in the rickety little cabaret which stands by the wayside.

It was warm as long as we remained in the gorge, but it grew distinctly chilly as we emerged into the bleaker region above. Marmaduke, who was seated upon the box of the carriage, and who earlier in the day had clamored against the heat, now with equal assiduity began to clamor against the cold, and all our available rugs and shawls were brought into requisition to minister to his requirements.

The endless zigzags of the last ten miles surmounted, we dipped under an arch, under that bristly semicircle of guns which guards the town of Medeah, and up to the empty hotel, the largest building (except the barracks) in

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the place, whence, having inspected the bedrooms assigned to us, we again sallied out to see what was to be seen.

Murray reports that Medeah is not an attractive place, and Murray speaks truly. Nowhere throughout the length and breadth of Algeria has the besom of French civilization swept more effectively; nowhere does the baffled traveler seek more vainly for the smallest trace of any thing in the shape of original Moorish constructions. Not a house, not a mosque, not an arch, not a doorway on this occasion rewarded our inquisitive, if doubtless cursory, investigation, and it was not until we reached the market-place that we began to recover any serious certainty as to our whereabouts at all.

Tired of tea-caddy architecture and bilious-colored bricks, we presently adjourned to the ramparts, which command a wide sweep over the scrub-covered hills surrounding the town; monotonous save where the ever-varied profile of the distant Djurdjura rose snow-capped to the sky. The Spahis we had passed in the gorge were making their way up the hill toward us, the floating crimson of their cloaks a

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welcome alleviation to the colorless monotony of a landscape, beggarly to eyes accustomed to the glow of Algiers, the meager *concessions* of the settlers, with their starved patches of wheat and maize and naked gooseberry bushes, agreeing but too well with the general tone of grimness and penury. There was nothing dubious now about the cold either. Momentarily it grew sharper and sharper, until we were fain to postpone all other occupations to the paramount one of endeavoring to extract some degree of warmth from the small, ill-constructed fireplace with which the sitting-room proved to be provided. Marmaduke's chill appeared to be developing into a cold in his head, which did not add to his agreeability, and when soon after nine o'clock some one suggested that it was bed-time, the idea was hailed as an obvious and unmistakable inspiration.

Cold as the evening had been, however, no one was prepared for the sight which greeted us in the morning. Waking in the gray light, with a sensation as if iced water was being gradually injected into my spinal marrow, I found, upon glancing at the window, that a thin

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stratum of snow had insinuated itself between the crevices of the woodwork, a somewhat deeper deposit covering the floor beneath, while a wider survey disclosed the not a little startling fact that every roof, every ledge, every tree, every footpath, was buried under a load of the same material, which was still steadily descending; the acacias in the *place* presenting a truly piteous appearance, their branches, green already with young leaves, bending helplessly under the weight of this incongruous burden thus suddenly thrust upon them.

Resisting heroically the impulse to remain where I was, I hurriedly dressed, and adjourned to the sitting-room which was upon the same landing. Hargrave, I learned from his servant whom I met in the passage, had gone out to make inquiries as to the possibility of our pushing on to Boghar, Marmaduke was still in bed, but Miss Bonson was standing by the window as I entered, and looking out upon the Arctic scene.

"Well, what do you say to *this* variation?" I inquired, as I approached her. "To be snowbound in Africa within three days of the first of

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April is an experience which falls, I should imagine, to the lot of few travelers."

"Very few indeed, I should think," she answered, turning round and smiling. "I wonder if in fact it ever did happen to any one before, or if we are the first?"

"Whether or not, I feel as if—speaking collectively—we owed you an apology for it," I continued, as I stationed myself beside her, "since you clearly are the victim. You only came to oblige us, and, like other good-natured people, you seem likely to pay pretty dearly for your amiability."

"Oh, I don't think you are bound to feel that," she answered quickly. "Indeed, as far as the cold goes, I do not mind, I am not at all sensitive to it. Marmaduke is, however," she continued seriously. "I have just been to see him, and he tells me that he has passed a wretched night. Some snow has come in at his window-ledge."

I remained respectfully silent; to manifest any very fervent sympathy with Marmaduke's not wholly unprecedented misfortune being more than at the moment I felt equal to.

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"He would never have come, he says, if he had had any notion that this sort of thing could happen," continued his sister.

"It is a pity, certainly, that he could not have found means to receive early information upon the subject," I replied, gravely. "It seems to me too as if he disliked heat quite as much as cold," I added, fearing that the not very disguised irony of my last remark might offend its hearer.

"Yes, he is, unfortunately, very sensitive to extremes of either kind," she replied. "He is not, you know, strong."

I again maintained a respectful silence, and we stood watching the large, slowly-descending flakes, black seemingly as so many coal smuts overhead, but gradually growing into whiteness, until they fell in dazzling drifts upon the already encumbered roofs and door-steps. Nearly opposite to where we were standing a *Bain Maure*—one of the few native institutions left in Medeah—presented its curtained archway to the street. Over this archway ran an inscription in French and Arabic, which informed the passer-by that this was the hour

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sacred to the ladies of the locality—a fact sufficiently evident from the group of swathed objects which stood in the entrance, and were from time to time recruited by a fresh figure paddling disconsolately along the slippery pavement. A pretty little Arab girl—her dark-blue haik well clutched in her small brown fingers—was peering furtively from behind another curtain a few doors higher up, her melancholy little face, with its high-arched brows, well in unison with the dismalness of the scene without.

"No, he is certainly not at all strong," Miss Bonson repeated, as if to impress me with the fact. "Indeed, when we first came to Algiers we were afraid that one of his lungs was affected, but the doctor says that there is no danger of that now. Still it is always necessary for him to be extremely careful."

Happily, before I could be expected to reply to this, the door behind us opened, and the interesting invalid himself entered the room. Hardly deigning to notice our greetings, he advanced to the fireplace, and, seating himself in an arm-chair, began piling up logs from a

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basket which stood near. His sister went over to see if she could minister to his comfort, but her attentions were so evidently ill-received that she presently desisted, and after a moment's hesitation rejoined me in the window.

The steady descent of snowflakes had latterly been growing slower, and at this moment a sudden gleam shot dazzlingly out across the town, lighting up the new white world, the still falling particles, the motley groups which filled the street—intensifying the already tolerably crowded incongruities of the scene.

Whether under the cheering influence of this new diversion, or, as I rather suspected, by way of diverting attention from her brother's unconciliatory demeanor, Miss Bonson grew suddenly animated, talking with a volubility very unlike her usual reticence. Standing close to the window, in defiance of the chill blast which streamed in through its innumerable apertures, she called my attention first to one and then to another figure as they drifted successively past our post of observation.

"How the crowd increases!" she exclaimed. "Now, in England, on such a day as this, the

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streets would be deserted, but here they evidently consider a snowstorm rather a pleasant variety than otherwise, and nobody seems to dream of staying indoors. Look at those boys trying to catch the flakes in their mouths as they fall, and that Arab coming down with a big blue umbrella over his head. An Arab and an umbrella! Could more incongruous ideas be brought together?"

"Are you sure, though, that he is an Arab?" I inquired. "Hargrave tells me that those men with black cloaks and blue stockings are almost invariably Jews, and I fancy that even from here I can perceive the tip of a very Israelitish-looking nose peeping out under his hood."

"Ah, very likely he is a Jew," she answered, "and of course in that case it would not be so surprising. But see, here, on the other hand, comes a colonist who has evidently borrowed his neighbor's burnous, and has rolled himself up in it until he looks like nothing so much as a fat old woman; and after him those Zouaves with none of their usual splendor showing except their red boots; and look! do

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look! Mr. Bell, at those three dear old negresses!"

"You two seem to find all this d——d amusing!" growled Marmaduke from the fireplace. "Hang me if I can see any thing in the least funny in being stuck in a beastly garrison town on the top of a mountain in the driving snow—with nothing but this sort of thing to warm one's self with either," he added, giving a vicious kick to the log of wood from which the sap was certainly at that moment issuing in a thin, green froth.

"Is your cold worse, do you think, Marmaduke?" his sister inquired anxiously.

"How much better do you think it's likely to get while this sort of thing goes on?" he retorted.

This time Miss Bonson prudently made no reply, and it was a relief when a minute or two later Hargrave entered, his face red with exposure to the cutting wind.

"How do you feel about pushing on to Boghar, Miss Bonson?" he exclaimed cheerily as he entered. "I've been talking to our driver, and he assures me that this snow is only about Medeah, and that if we will but start we shall

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not have gone more than half a mile—not one little kilometer—before the sun will be so hot we shall have to put up the awning."

"What a liar he is!" ejaculated Marmaduke from the fireplace.

"I dare say it is true. You know we are tremendously high up here—as high as the top of Snowdon or Ben Nevis. Now at Boghar I shouldn't wonder if there has not been a single snowflake all the time, nor at Blidah probably either."

"I bet you a thousand pounds that there has been at both," returned the other; but no one accepted his sporting offer.

"Would the horses be able to travel again so soon?" inquired Miss Bonson.

"Oh, yes, perfectly. The man assures me that they are as fresh as possible; that they would go '*comme des lions*,' that was his own expression."

"You won't catch *me* rattling about over mountains in an open carriage in such weather as this, I can tell you," growled Marmaduke; and this time there was a sullen resolution in his voice which showed that he meant it.

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"You'll find it warmer than staying where you are, then, I assure you," Hargrave answered quickly. "This is about the coldest place, remember, on our whole journey."

"Very likely, but I'm not going to stay here either. I'm going——" he paused and looked round as if to defy us to contradict him—"I'm going back to Algiers in the diligence."

John started forward.

"Nonsense, Bonson, you can't mean that," he said indignantly. "You couldn't have the face to break up our party in that fashion. You, too, that were the one to urge us all to come!"

"I do mean it, though. And as to urging you, you may lay any money I'd never have come a yard myself if I could have guessed we'd come in for this sort of thing. Larking off L'Aghouat is good fun enough in decent weather, but to be put to sleep in places like enlarged mousetraps when the thermometer is down to freezing point is what I fail to see the smallest entertainment in."

"But I tell you, man, it will be warm again the minute we get to Boghar."

"That's rubbish, Hargrave; you can't tell

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whether it will or not. Any how, driving over mountains in that open carriage of yours would be simple insanity this weather."

I waited, hoping devoutly for a repetition of the previous evening's explosion. This time, unfortunately, I waited in vain. Instead Hargrave turned abruptly away to a distant window, where he stood silently pulling the ends of his mustache. For several minutes no one in the room uttered a word, until at last Miss Bonson, leaving the window, approached her brother.

"This snow is really clearing away fast, Marmaduke," she said urgently. "Do look, how very clear it is over those hills yonder! Indeed I think we might venture on to Boghar; unless of course, you think it would do you any serious harm. And I think it would be most unfair to Mr. Hargrave if we were to turn back *now*," she added in a lower tone, not perhaps audible across the room.

"All right, go on to Boghar by all means if you choose," was the answer, delivered in an even louder tone than usual. "All I said was that I wasn't."

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This was a little too much even for John's endurance.

"Don't talk such nonsense, Bonson," he said, turning angrily round, "you know perfectly well that your sister can't go on if you don't."

"Very well then, she can come back to Algiers with me this afternoon in the diligence."

There was nothing more to be said. Undoubtedly the little monster was completely master of the situation. His sister, it was clear, could not go without him, and Hargrave, it was equally clear to me, would have no desire at all to go if she remained behind. To have taken young Marmaduke Bonson up then and there by the nape of his neck, and, having first thoroughly shaken him, to have dropped him out of the window into the big pile of half-melted snow which lay in the street below would have given me, I own, the deepest and most soothing satisfaction. This mode of settling the matter being, however, unfortunately out of the question, and no gentler argument being likely to produce the smallest effect,

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there was nothing for it but to submit to having our plans capsized, and ourselves sent to the right-about at a moment's notice to suit his caprice.

Miss Bonson was the most to be pitied really of the whole party, her face expressing all that mixture of shame and discomfort which she undoubtedly must have felt. She stepped forward as if again about to make a fresh appeal to her brother; then reading apparently in that affectionate relative's face the utter hopelessness of the attempt, she turned and approached Hargrave with an air of decision.

"Mr. Hargrave, you must not let this sudden resolution of Marmaduke's alter *your* arrangements," she said decidedly. "You and Mr. Bell must go on to L'Aghouat all the same. Indeed, indeed you will make me utterly wretched if you do not," she added entreatingly, reading apparently in his face that he was about to refuse.

"No, no; if you go back we shall all go," he answered hastily. "Isn't it so?" he added looking over at me.

I nodded affirmatively. Naturally it was not

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quite such an absolute matter of course to me as it was to him. In the first place I was not in love, in the second place I had never seen L'Aghouat, whereas Hargrave had. Seeing, however, that I was his guest, that the expedition was his, and that he was paymaster, it stood to reason that any decision which he came to must be equally of necessity binding upon me.

Miss Bonson almost wrung her hands in the extremity of her distress. She looked over at her brother as if about to make another appeal to his generosity; when, by way probably of clinching the matter, he got up and calmly announced that he was going to see about their places, and so saying departed from the scene.

We waited some little time, then, finding that he did not return, Hargrave rang the bell, when further inquiries elicited two facts; one being that all the places in the diligence were already taken; the other that a considerable snowdrift was said to have lodged in the gorge up which we had driven the previous day, so that it was thought unlikely, the waiter said,

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that any carriage would be able to descend to Blidah that day.

"We must wait where we are then until to-morrow, I suppose," Miss Bonson said with a sort of despairing resignation.

"I suppose so too," Hargrave answered gloomily. "Unless, perhaps, your brother would prefer that you should walk," he added, as the man left the room.

One thing at all events was tolerably clear, and that was that nothing further was to be done at present. So as the snow had by this time almost ceased, and I was curious to see the town in its Arctic dress, I announced my intention of going out for a walk until the twelve o'clock *déjeûner* was ready, and accordingly went off to my room to look out the necessary strong boots.

Passing the sitting-room door a few minutes later, I saw Miss Bonson and Hargrave standing in the same place by the window; she, apparently, still tendering those apologies which the culprit himself had evidently not the smallest intention of presenting in person to any body.

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CHAPTER VIII.

WE RETURN FROM THE ATLAS MOUNTAINS.

WHEN I returned fully an hour later from my walk through the town I found them almost in the same attitude, and still *tête-à-tête*, the offending Marmaduke having had the decency or the prudence to withdraw himself temporarily from public gaze. My first idea upon entering the room was that some means must have been found to get over the opposing difficulty, and that our fallen plans were again resuscitated, Hargrave's face having quite lost its crestfallen expression, expressing indeed a sort of beatitude, if that word be not somewhat too florid to employ in describing features which had certainly never gone into much previous training for the display of such exalted emotions. He got up as I entered, and turned round with an air of bewilderment, almost as if for the moment in doubt as to my identity.

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"Hullo! You, Adolphus? Back already? I suppose then it is getting pretty near to breakfast time?" he said.

"I suppose so too," I responded dryly. "At least twelve o'clock was the hour you mentioned, and it now wants only twenty minutes of one."

"Twenty minutes of one! Bless me, you will all be starved," and he hurried out of the room, presumably to hasten on the laggard preparations.

The meal to which we were presently summoned was not an exhilarating one, despite the continued absence of Marmaduke, who having succeeded in securing a bedroom with a fireplace, preferred to remain in that dignified seclusion and to nurse his cold. It was satisfactory to find that this distressing malady did not seem seriously to interfere with his appetite. Four distinct times the waiter was dispatched with fresh reinforcements, and once Miss Bonson herself left the room in order to see that every thing necessary for the invalid's comfort was duly provided. During this latter absence Hargrave sat tugging at his mustache with

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short, quick jerks which seemed to imply a doubt whether an excess of sisterly devotion might not under certain circumstances amount almost to a failing.

Breakfast over he proposed our taking a turn, to which, after a moment's hesitation, Miss Bonson agreed, and we walked briskly for some time about the town, her manner continuing to exhibit toward him that marked and even eager kindliness which had distinguished it ever since the beginning of this recent episode. Finding that the others were bent upon taking the same route which I had already traversed in the morning I turned back before very long to the hotel, stating that I was thinking of looking out the materials of a sketch, and so left them to pursue it uninterrupted. My sympathy with the sister of that unpleasant young man Marmaduke was beginning by this time to be qualified by a certain degree of irritation as regards her recent conduct. Vicarious penitence is all very well, but it ought to have its due limits, and it ought also, I thought, to take its proper direction. Hargrave, it was evident, was com-

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pletely, if not willfully, blindfolding himself as to the nature of these doubtless gratifying kindnesses, which, coming after a long course of persistent discouragement, had the effect of starting his well-nigh drooping hopes into fresh, and, as it seemed to me, quite unwarrantable activity. Personal considerations may have had something to say to my clear-sightedness upon this head. It did seem to me, I must say, odd that no one appeared to perceive who the real victim of the whole fiasco was. Not Hargrave, since he had already been to L'Aghouat; not Miss Bonson, since she had never expressed the smallest desire to go there; while Marmaduke was obviously out of the question, he being the one impediment to our not at that very moment being on our road thither. Now *I* had never been to L'Aghouat, or any where else in Algeria for that matter; *I* had always from the beginning expressed a desire to visit it; and *I* certainly had never dreamed of putting any impediments in the path. It must be clear, therefore, to every right-judging person, where any superfluous sympathy ought in the first in-

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stance to have been tendered. Wild horses would not have induced me to express this view, but there are things, as every one knows, which a man can not and will not express for himself which ought nevertheless to be perfectly unmistakable to those about him. Added to this, Hargrave's part seemed to me, I must own, an undignified, I may even say a foolish one. That after such unmistakable indications to the contrary he should continue to cherish any illusions (apart from such family pressure as might be exercised in his favor), seemed to me a piece of perversity hardly consistent with what I had previously regarded as his sense and judgment. True, he was under the influence of a passion notoriously the greatest corrupter of both, and possibly the fact of his having taken that malady at so comparatively advanced an age made it—I thought, with an effort at leniency—only the more difficult for him to escape its foibles.

That evening the thaw set in with a will, arriving with a sunset gorgeous even for Algeria. Against the liquid lakes of gold, scarlet, and emerald, a couple of absurd little lop-sided

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green crescents stuck upon spikes which decorated the top of the baths stood out as if carved in the finest ebony. For hours the rattle of wheels and the cracking of whips hardly ceased for an instant, nor yet the blowing of bugles from the bilious-looking yellow barracks which crown the town. Street-criers vociferously shouted their wares; a discordant chorus of voices, French and Arabic, appeared to be floating perpetually up and down in front of our windows; it seemed as though the whole population of Medeah, partially paralyzed during the day, was bursting out into fresh vigor under the enlivening influence of the thaw. Impossible for any thing to be more absolutely perfect either than was the following morning. As we drove out of the gates the color of the sky as seen through the arches of the disfigured aqueduct was a thing to wonder at. The snow, which had left the valleys, still covered the hills, giving them an effect of dignity to which they were hardly otherwise entitled. We were again in the wagonnette, the diligence having been found to be crammed to the uttermost, even our luggage and Hargrave's servant hav-

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ing with some difficulty found room in it. It was with considerable inward satisfaction I observed that the exasperating author of all our discomfiture was himself not a little discomfited when he began to realize the change which the last twelve hours had produced in the state of the thermometer. He had emerged from the seclusion of his bedroom enveloped to the very eyes—a large gray shawl belonging to his sister wound about his loins, a scarlet muffler around his neck—and in all the conscious dignity of a man known to be suffering from a severe cold in the head. Gradually, however, I observed him first insidiously endeavoring to loosen the folds of his muffler, and then struggling to free himself unseen from the multitudinous other encumbrances in which he had so securely enveloped his valuable person, as more and more the heat of the sun made itself felt. For the life of me I could not deny myself the enjoyment of an occasional comment upon the heat and magnificence of the day, a satisfaction which the others strictly abstained from, preserving a polite silence, and apparently ignoring the very sunshine which threatened to blind our eyes.

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If the outward journey was a silent one, the return journey was, if any thing, rather more so. Hargrave wore an excited, feverish air—the air of a man who is girding himself up to some supreme effort. Miss Bonson seemed depressed; Marmaduke and I, who sat *vis-à-vis*, glared at one another at intervals; while our driver, who had counted upon taking us as far as Boghar, and was naturally exasperated at the change, avenged himself by hurling a perfect rolling fire of *r-rs* at every unfortunate wayfarer that strayed across his path, once deliberately driving into a drove of bullocks, thereby dislocating his carriage-pole, with the result of delaying us nearly half an hour while it was being adjusted into its place again.

Despite this casualty, and despite the state of the roads, we had a long time to wait for the train, and when it arrived every compartment appeared crammed, some function at Oran having caused a concentration of officialism, civil and military, in that direction. Espying an empty seat in a smoking-carriage I jumped in, Hargrave being already engaged in

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seeing Miss Bonson into a carriage a little further down. Just as the train was about to start, the door of my compartment suddenly opened, and, to my disgust, the irrepressible Marmaduke entered, trailing his draperies after him, and proceeded to ensconce himself into a narrow space between myself and the stout wife of an irascible Chasseur d'Afrique, thereby causing that gallant officer to glare unutterable things at us from the opposite side of the carriage.

"Never knew such a beastly squeeze? Couldn't find another spot anywhere," the young man muttered, though whether the apology was addressed to me, or to himself for having to endure my company, was more than I can say.

"It's of no consequence as far as I am concerned," I replied, freezingly; "but won't your sister rather dislike being left alone in that fashion?"

"Hildegarde? Not she. Besides, she's not alone. Hargrave is there," he answered.

I said no more. It was not my business to look after Miss Bonson if her natural guardian

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failed to do so. By the suppressed grin, too, with which the last three words were uttered, I suspected that the little wretch was secretly pluming himself upon the diplomacy with which this last and crowning opportunity had been afforded Hargrave, probably reckoning upon it as an all-sufficient response to his mother, should she, as was not improbable, take him to task for cutting short an expedition fraught with so many and such exhilarating hopes.

We left the train, not at Algiers, but at a smaller station upon the Oran side of it. Emerging upon the platform I caught sight of Hargrave, who was looking up and down evidently in search of my companion, who was still leisurely struggling with his multifarious wraps. A glance told that something had happened. A change had come over the spirit of his dream. He looked perturbed, haggard, like a man who had sustained a shock. Espying us he advanced hastily: "Here, Bonson, your sister wants you," he said. "Don't stay there, man, she's alone," he added, impatiently.

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The young man addressed opened his mouth as if to reply. Seeing apparently something in John's face, however, that did not brook trifling, he judiciously shut it again, and obeyed so far as to follow his sister, who was rapidly making her way toward the distant exit. We were delayed a minute or two by the crowd which blocked the platform, and by the time we had succeeded in extricating ourselves, and had struggled through the narrow doorway, neither brother nor sister remained any longer visible.

Evidently Hargrave must have telegraphed to acquaint his household of the change of plans, for one of his numerous carriages was standing at the door waiting to receive us as we emerged.

Something in the selection either of the carriage itself or of the horses appeared to displease their owner, for he spoke sharply to the man who was driving—not Tummins, but some inferior functionary—thereby awakening, I saw, a momentary gleam of astonishment in that worthy's well-trained countenance.

The drive was not a long one, and I

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was glad of it, as we were both of us palpably embarrassed in the other's presence. As we passed through the entrance gates and slowly ascended the avenue, it seemed as if that region of snow and frost we had just left must have been visited only in a dream. A delicious glow—sunny, yet subdued—brooded over the whole scene. Against this glow the flat-topped walls of Hargrave's mansion rose conspicuous. To and fro and under its elaborately-carved eaves a tribe of swallows were busily flying, each with a lump of mud in its audacious beak. Below, the tideless sea stretched its blue, crestless waves; the long, fine line of coast, ending in Cap Matifou, seemed to sweep away the eye into immeasurable azure. All this plenitude of light, life, color, loveliness, appeared suddenly springing into existence and rushing forward to greet us upon our return. We went indoors, but it was too lovely to stay there, and presently I lounged out again into the court, and stood confronting the view, framed, as it was, vista-fashion, by two of the marble pillars, twisting their spiral columns upward to meet the capitals. A gentle breeze stirred the leaves

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of the papyrus about the tank, so that they rustled faintly; a glow from the impending sunset broke over the garden, already glowing with a hundred tints. After a while John, too, emerged from the house and passed hastily through the court. I addressed some indifferent observation to him, but he hardly heeded, and passed on in the direction of the orangery.

After hesitating a moment whether or not to follow him, I finally decided that, on the whole, I would remain where I was. Easy-going as he is, John is not a man upon whom it would be comfortable to force one's company against his will, and that something was seriously amiss now I had very little doubt, any more than I had as to what that something must of necessity be.

A ridiculous little window, or rather peep-hole, chanced to be in the outer wall, and near this I presently stationed myself. A great orange-tree which grew close up to this corner of the house, thrust its oval leaves and big globose fruit almost into my face. Between these, however, I could see the walk leading

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through the lemons up to the two big cypresses in which this part of the garden ended. What had happened exactly I wondered, as I listened to John's steps pacing to and fro its umbrageous length. Had he put his fate to the touch, or had his house of cards fallen before even a finger was laid upon it? I was sorry for him, and yet—dare I confess it?—there was a certain glow, a secret, unacknowledged exhilaration in my own mind, which there had certainly not been five or six hours previously. After all, I thought, as I glanced around me in the gloaming, when a man possesses every thing, literally every thing else that heart can desire, courts and gardens, palm-trees, lemon groves—not to speak of such prosaic things as a prodigiously successful business and a swollen balance at his banker's—is there not a certain fitness—a certain, I might almost go so far as to say, poetical justice—in his not being able to add to his other stores one which, if it doubtless lends the rest value, can hardly, even to the most romantic mind, be said to outweigh their more manifest and substantial advantages? Besides,

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upon the plainest and most rational footing, if the man wanted to go in for one of these tremendously neck-or-nothing romantic affairs, why, in the name of reason, not have tried his hand at it a dozen years earlier? I said to myself with a shrug.

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CHAPTER IX.

MOONLIGHT AT THE CHATEAU D'OC.

DINNER that evening was served as usual in the small dining-room with the tile-covered walls, and suggestively protected windows. As long as the servants were in the room, Hargrave and myself exchanged an occasional remark, chiefly for their benefit, but after those domestic inquisitors were withdrawn the silence deepened until it became almost unendurable. My companion's depression was so evident, and even aggressive a fact that after a while I thought I might venture to allude to it.

"Any thing amiss, John?" I said in as indifferent a tone as I could muster. "You don't seem in your usual spirits to-night?"

"No," he said absently. After this there was another long silence, and I thought he was going to say no more. Suddenly, as if under

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some irresistible impulse, he burst out—"And yet, if ever a man was not impatient, if ever a man tried not to bring down perdition upon his head, *I* did. God knows I didn't want to hurry her—I wasn't such an idiot as to suppose I could make her care—not easily. I swore unless I saw reason to come forward, nothing should induce me to plague her, and now, and now——" he stopped and remained staring blankly across the table, not in the least like a man addresses a friend, but like one who soliloquizes wholly for the benefit of his own mind.

"I can't pretend to misunderstand you, John," I said. "You are speaking of Miss Bonson. Something has taken place between you."

He glanced up frowningly, as if annoyed at the interruption.

I was about to say something further, when he began again, still with the same air of addressing not me but himself.

"And the hardest part of it is——" he paused, and looked not at me, but at something several yards beyond me, "the hardest

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part of it is that upon my soul I believe she—cares for me." He stopped, and this time for an instant his eyes did rest on mine.

I was puzzled what to say. It is not easy to converse with a man who has apparently forgotten your existence, neither was it an appropriate moment for condolences, still less I felt for consolations. Again, though, naturally desirous of showing myself all that was appropriately sympathetic, as regards this last assertion, what answer could I make, seeing that I held him to be laboring under a great if doubtless pitiable delusion? A feeling of irritation, too, began to assail me. Personally his manner was not pleasant. Much doubtless must be forgiven to a man in his condition, still to be thus openly ignored by one's host at his own dinner-table is an experience the reverse of agreeable, and I felt a need therefore of stinging him into at least a formal recognition of my presence. "I understand your thinking so yesterday, John," I began delicately, "but then you must remember——"

"Yesterday," he interrupted. "I was not thinking of yesterday." He stopped, and again

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seemed to plunge into renewed reverie. "Oh, it's as plain as possible," he went on in another moment. "It's the money! They've crammed it down her throat till she sickens of it, and of me too on account of it. Curse the thing!" he added, bringing his hand down upon the table with a thump which rattled all the wine glasses.

"Don't blaspheme, John," I replied cheerfully, "money is not a thing to abuse like that, I can assure you; you millionaires don't know when you're well off."

This time he did look round, almost as if he realized my presence there for the first time. "Ah, you think money a tremendously fine thing too, don't you, Adolphus?" he said, smiling rather drearily, "and yet do you know at this moment I would willingly get rid of a good deal of mine if I only saw my way to doing it harmlessly."

"There's no great difficulty about that," I replied. "You've only to hand over whatever you don't require to me, I'll take good care you're not troubled with it any more!"

He smiled again. "Well, yes, that sounds

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true enough ; still it is not so easily done as it sounds, is it? Come along, we'll go up stairs to the smoking-room." We adjourned accordingly up stairs, but Hargrave seemed too restless to remain there, so, as the moon was shining brightly, suggested that we should go and finish our cigars upon the roof, a proposal to which I promptly consented.

To reach this portion of the building it was necessary to pass through a second and smaller court where at this hour of the evening the venerable Hicklebury and his fellows were supping in high state, waited upon by their social inferiors. As we passed, ourselves invisible, along the passage which encircled the top of the court, fragments of conversation were wafted to us from below. On this occasion Mr. Tummins appeared to have the ear of the company, his discourse, judging by the extracts we overheard, referring to some bygone horse-dealing transaction, in which he and his master had figured.

"And at that Sir Garge, he says, says he: 'A thousand guineas is a deal o' money for that there pair of wheelers,' says he. So ups and

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says master, 'I'll have 'em,' says he; and he whipp'd out his check-book, and writes down his check then and there upon the nail. Ah, there's a deal o' satisfaction in 'avin to do with a gent what's as free with 'is cash as is Mr. 'Argrave."

I heard John give a groan as we stumbled along the dark passage toward the door which led out upon the roof. The next moment we paused, blinded by the light which seemed to strike upward from the roof, stretching before us like a miniature lake in the moonlight. Above, the line of cypresses upon the hill-side rose darkly, their shadows—blacker, if possible, than themselves—flung out behind them upon the white ground. Bats came flying round, uttering shrill squeaks and vanishing again into the dusk. Below the rising ground on which the villa stood, the plain of the Metidja stretched away—vaporous, mystical, without form and void—every thing beyond being lost in the pale slumberous gray of the hills, over which a moon, round as a dutch cheese, seemed to be swimming languorously in its own light.

Hargrave crossed to the furthest part of the

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roof and stood looking seaward, while I remained where I was, leaning over the parapet and watching the smoke from my cigar curling leisurely away into space.

Not a sound was audible, save the intermittent yelping of a dog, and the unintermittent croak of the frogs from the tanks in the garden. A few lights sparkled at the bottom of the hill, and near Hussein Dey the vanishing trail of a train shone like some dull terrestrial comet along the ground.

Crossing over to the other side, I looked out at the white cataract of houses, frozen seemingly in the act of slipping down the slope, at the harbor with its geometrical lines, at the nearer villa-bedotted Mustapha, the meanest of whose houses looked well in that ennobling moonlight. More than most places, Algiers possesses certain potentialities of beauty which at times are almost startling in their vividness. Seen in the ordinary midday sunlight, it looks prosaic enough. Seen upon such a night as this, under such a flood of moonlight above such a sea, beneath such a sky, one finds one's self dominated by its puissant charm, seeming

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to hold one's breath in wonder as one looks. The very indefiniteness of every thing seemed to me only to lend fresh force and emphasis to such forms and colors as remained; to these masses of white houses, these shadow-darkened hollows, this great watery plain without one line to tell where its moon-tinged levels met the moon-filled sky. Sea, mountain, shore, and vapor-filled background, the whole scene was full of that ineffable unreproduceable beauty, the most seductive perhaps of all to the onlooker, the most hopelessly exasperating certainly to the painter, who in all this witchery finds not one line or one detail upon which he can any where hang his craft. Perhaps it was on account of this self-evident impossibility that the idea just then occurred to me that I would go down and hunt out some painting materials, and I had half risen to put this idea into execution when Hargrave, turning round, announced that he was going into the garden, and so saying led the way evidently with the expectation of my following him. I did so, and we accordingly again made the circuit of the passage, and, descending the stairs,

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passed through the court and along the walk to a sort of small open court which lay beyond. Here a hammock was swinging between two poles, into which I clambered, by way of a hint that my divagations were over for the present, one which my companion seemed to accept as such, for he presently wandered away on to the terrace above, while I lay still in my hammock looking across the garden at the house shining like some great snow palace in the moonlight, at the spikes of yellow fennel, each spike a good two yards high, which rose tower-like out of the jungle of cistus and acanthus below me; shutting my eyes from time to time too, and trying to picture myself back again in the studio with its disorderly litter of painting things, its walls bestrewn with artistic wrecks, Simcox stippling laboriously at one easel, Brown Judkins hurling chunks of oil paint at his canvas at another, the fog without, and the smuts, the dust, the tobacco-smoke within. The effort was not, however, a successful one, and I began to wonder whether my failure to realize myself back again in Algiers a fortnight or so say hence might not be even more conspicuous.

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The indifference to the comfort of others shown by those who are, or fancy themselves to be, in love, has been often pointed out, but I little thought as I was lounging peacefully that evening under the orange trees, how soon I was myself to be a victim to it! So, however, it proved. The very next morning, at breakfast, Hargrave, without apology, without even appearing to regard my convenience in the matter, suddenly announced his intention of starting upon a prolonged yachting cruise—he was not sure where—to Corsica or Sicily, possibly Greece and the Ionian Isles; it might be to Cyprus and Alexandria. Should I care to accompany him, or should I prefer spending what remained of my holiday in Paris or elsewhere, upon the understanding—that I must do him the justice to say he did add—that though no longer present in person, he was still to be present in the character of host and paymaster?

With my usual power of coming to a rapid decision I at once chose the latter alternative, my solitary experience of Mediterranean voyaging not at all inclining me to hazard any

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protracted repetition of the experiment; neither did I think that Hargrave, under present circumstances, would be by any means a particularly agreeable companion. A fortnight of Paris was no doubt a suggestion not without charms, still to leave Algiers in this summary fashion was, I felt, an annoyance to which not even the prospect of unlimited wanderings about the Quartier Latin and such-like classic precincts could at all serve to reconcile me.

In spite of the limited number of my remaining hours I found time to pay a farewell call at the Villa El Hadjadj. No one, however, was at home, so the brown-faced menial who opened the door averred, and the silence of the house seemed to bear out his assertion. The tadpoles in the court were at home, I can certify, for they started away with their usual convulsive energy as I skirted their abode on my way to and from the house. Passing the *loggia* where I had first seen Miss Bonson I glanced up, half hoping to find some traces still of her presence. In this I was disappointed. The place wore an unoccupied air, the door leading into the house was closely shut, the mantle of gorgeous-

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colored leafage which overhung the walls showed a good many discolored blotches, the ground below being covered with hectic two-winged fragments, as though an army of butterflies had been routed and slain upon the spot. Glancing back as I regained the gate leading to the road, I could not forbear a momentary thrill of respect for the resolution which had resisted exchanging that blighted and penurious atmosphere which it seemed to inclose, for those larger, more satisfying surroundings which it was in Hargrave's power to offer. Looking at the matter from the latter's point of view, however, it certainly did seem a trifle hard, that after getting safely through some five-and-forty years without undergoing either the joys or the pangs of love-making, his very first essay of the sort should have turned out so manifest and deplorable a failure!

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CHAPTER X.

SIX MONTHS AFTER.

OCTOBER 10, 188-.—For a week past I have had an intermittent engagement in the Print-room of the British Museum, having received an order for the copying of certain drawings therein from that well-known patron of the arts and artists, Mr. Fitz-Montagu Biggs, whose house in Tavistock Square is a perfect store-house—rather I may say a mausoleum—for the efforts of contemporary genius. Autotype fac-similes of the designs of great masters have, as every one knows, been of late obtainable upon what may be called ridiculously reasonable terms. For that very reason, probably, Mr. Fitz-Montagu Biggs scorns to encumber his walls with them, preferring to avail himself of more costly if also less exact methods. A commission to reproduce a certain number of

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these drawings having been offered to me, and being, like every other emanating from the same source, upon a decidedly liberal scale of remuneration, I accepted it, and have in consequence, as I have said, made sundry expeditions to the Print-room for the purpose of carrying it into effect. As work, I can not say that it particularly commends itself to my taste. There is a nasty niggling necessity for accuracy about it which I find checking and balking to the more vigorous flow of my own pencil. After executing three or four of the drawings, therefore, I have been rather thinking of handing over the remainder of the task to Simcox, who, poor devil! would be glad enough of the job, and whose naturally labored style of manipulation would find itself considerably more at ease in it than my own could possibly hope to be. An incident, however, which occurred this afternoon disposes me to hesitate a little in this purpose, or at any rate to defer its execution for some few days to come.

I had left the Print-room and was passing along the sculpture-galleries—not, by the way, the nearest route to the door—when I was

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arrested by the sight of a young lady who was standing at work before an easel, about halfway down the length of the longest gallery. Although her back was toward me, and her face consequently invisible, I was at once struck by something familiar in the poise of the figure and graceful turn of the head, and was in the act of wondering when and where I had seen both before, when, laying down her crayon upon the edge of the easel, she suddenly seated herself with an air of discouragement, letting her hands fall idly upon her lap. In doing so her profile became visible, and at the same instant I recognized in the dejected artist my beautiful Algerian acquaintance, Miss Bonson!

Hastening forward with an ejaculation of pleasure, I approached the bench upon which she had seated herself, at the same time holding out my hand.

She looked up, and her face, which had previously been rather pale, became suddenly and flatteringly suffused with color at sight of me. She gave, I noticed, a quick little glance beyond, almost as if in expectation of

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seeing some one else, and her greeting, though friendly, was not without a certain air of constraint.

"I had no idea you were in London," I exclaimed joyfully. "When did you arrive?"

"Only a few days ago. My mother and I have been spending the summer in Switzerland, but she has returned to Algiers, and I have come here to stay with an aunt."

"You have chosen about the most melancholy of all moments for your arrival in your native land," I said. "You have not lost any time in setting to work, however, I see. You mean to go in seriously for art this winter, do you not?"

"Yes, I hope so; that was my idea in coming to London. I hope to get into one of the art-schools, but they are not open yet, and in the meantime I have been advised to come here and practice drawing from these statues. I had no idea that I should find them so dreadfully difficult though!" she added with a candid sigh.

"That one you have chosen to begin upon is particularly so," I answered; "and you have

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put yourself in the hardest of all possible positions for drawing it also," I added, going forward a step or two so as to put myself into her former place.

Miss Bonson seemed to brighten a little at this intimation.

"I fancied it must be," she answered; "for though I have been trying for the last three days, oh so hard! to draw it, I can not. The more I try the worse it seems to get!"

"I am sorry I never happened to pass this way before, or I might possibly have been of some slight assistance to you," I said. "Even now, perhaps, if you will let me take your crayon, I might show you a little before we are turned out."

"Would you? Oh, I should be so grateful! I don't see, though, that I have any right to take up your time."

"I give you the right, then," I answered. "At this time of the day, too, an artist's time is not of any very profound value."

I took up her crayon as I spoke, and, having pointed the chalk, began amending the outline of the drawing at the point at which Miss Bon-

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son's hand seemed to have dropped nerveless from the task.

"You see you have drawn a good deal more than you could possibly have seen from where you were," I explained as I did so. "You did not remember to allow enough for the foreshortening."

She listened attentively to my explanations, following the rectifications with her eyes and silently comparing the lines of the statue with those which I was then tracing upon her paper. The gallery was by this time nearly depopulated; a distant sound of footsteps, and of putting away of chairs and boards alone broke jarringly upon the silence. The long lines of busts perched upon their pedestals, and more sparsely scattered statues seeming to form a polite but not particularly interested audience around us, the more distant ones already growing gray and ghostly in the dim October twilight. We were not long left to enjoy our solitude, however. Hardly a quarter of an hour, I think, can have elapsed before a grim-looking personage in a brown bombazine skirt and a black alpaca mantle appeared upon the

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scene under the guidance of one of the attendants, at sight of whom Miss Bonson at once began putting together her various scattered utensils.

"I am sorry my aunt should have thought it necessary to send you for me, Deborah," she said, apologetically. "I could have found my own way back perfectly by the train as I came."

"Miss Alicia *said* as I was to come, miss," the woman replied stolidly, "and you was to take a *cab* back to Ebury Street, if you pleased, because it was a-getting late, and she thought it was a-going to rain," she added, glancing sourly at me, as though I were responsible both for the bad weather and the disturbance which had been effected in her own afternoon habits.

Under this redoubtable escort Miss Bonson speedily left the Museum. I accompanied her as far as the gate, where, having found a cab and put her into it, we parted, though not until I had ascertained that she was likely to be at the Museum every students' day for some little time to come.

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October 14.—She is certainly amazingly handsome, far more so than I had any notion of in Algiers! This morning I missed her at the District Railway Station, but on arriving at the Museum I found that she was already in her usual place. No one else had as yet arrived, and but for the mute encompassing society in marble she would have been alone. Statues are not as a rule becoming company, but Miss Bonson is one that can bear the test of their neighborhood better than most people. As I came up the gallery she was standing motionless before her easel, frowning slightly, and scanning her work evidently in no contented spirit. A colossal Greek mask, propped upon the shelf above her head, seemed looking down upon her in vacant-eyed surprise, while upon the other side a faun, his white limbs well defined against the reddish color of his alcove, capered and screwed his face into a thousand fantastic wrinkles, as if in impish enjoyment of her perplexities.

On seeing me she brightened visibly, and offered no demur when I proceeded to take up her crayon. After a few minutes, however, she

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insisted that I had done enough, and must not remain any longer away from my own work. I obeyed, but found an opportunity of returning later, pleading that I was on my way back from luncheon. She looked woefully tired, as indeed she had every right to be, and at my entreaty presently left her smudgings for a while, and we sauntered together through the galleries; past the immortal procession of the Elgin Marbles; through halls chiefly tenanted by a grim assemblage of winged and clawed Assyrian bulls, threading our way amid a labyrinth of stony inscriptions, and fossil-like sarcophagi; after which, avoiding the staircase leading to the stuffed owls and alligators, we wandered through some of the other lower galleries, vacant just then for the most part of sightseers; and so, through the entrance hall where the umbrellas live, back to the sculpture-gallery by another doorway.

People are really not half aware of the value of the Museum as a lounge. These rooms, so still, so capacious, open delightfully into one another, their size and number hindering them from ever getting into that blindly choked

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condition which is the curse of almost every other London show. They are warm, too—no slight boon in weather like this we have just entered upon—indeed when one compares them with the state of affairs without, one's perpetual wonder is how they come to be as deserted as one sees them. Miss Bonson, I flatter myself, enjoyed her stroll, and seemed to return with fresh zest to grapple with her difficulties. I suggested her giving up the present ones for the moment, and try her hand at a bust, but she shook her head at the proposition, and when shortly after three o'clock I was obliged to leave, in order to keep an unluckily-formed engagement, she was still struggling doughtily with her self-imposed, but evidently very far from relished task.

N. B.—I shall certainly not make over my own work in the Print-room to Simcox for the present.

October 20.—What perplexes me more and more every time we meet, is why Miss Bonson considers herself called upon to work so desperately hard as she has been doing lately. Certainly she does not enjoy it! Even in her

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most expansive moments I have never once known her indulge in any of those exalted anticipations, that sublime scorn of all but the loftiest achievement, which is probably commonest among students who have still their artistic pot-hooks and hangers to learn. Every word she utters, every attempt she makes, shows me that she looks upon it simply as a task, a duty in some way or other binding, but why binding or by whom she can be supposed to be so bound, is what I have yet to discover.

October 30.—I have been talking over the Bonson family with Simcox, who possesses that minute second-hand, or rather tenth-hand, information upon social matters which a man who gives his whole soul to the study of the peerage, and peruses all the so-called fashionable journals, seems capable in time of acquiring. They are as poor as church mice, every one of them, he says. Even the present head of the family is little better than a pauper with a title. Mrs. Bonson, he believes, was the daughter of a half-pay captain, and what little her husband may have had of his own had long

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since gone the same road as all the rest of the family property. There have been queer stories, too, about most of them, he declares. Did I mean to say that I had never heard of the Bonson who ran away with the prima donna in the middle of an opera, leaving the audience (which included his own wife) to wait for the last act, which of course never was given at all? Why, even about the present Lord Sandgate there were stories very nearly as surprising going, as any club man could tell me; added to which he was known to be always reduced to the last shift in order to raise a penny, and had stood figure-head to more bubble companies than probably any man of his standing in London. I thanked Simcox for these interesting fragments of family history and retired to meditate over them in private. How much of all this is true, I wonder? If any considerable part of it—and I am bound to say Miss Bonson's dogged industry seems to bear out one half, and my recollections of that unpleasant young man, her brother Marmaduke, to give some color to the other—one thing forces itself very clearly and prominently upon my

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mind. How intensely that poor girl must have disliked John Hargrave, if even the desirability of escaping from this uncomfortable state of poverty and this very undesirable crew of relations could not induce her to accept him!

November 18.—We have had a quarrel, or at all events a disagreement, the worst consequence of which to me is that more than a week has now passed and I have not seen her!

It began in the most innocent way possible. I had been describing the work I was engaged upon in the Print-room, suggesting that it might be worth Miss Bonson's while to try her own hand at some of the drawings. She would find them probably a good deal easier to do, I said, than what she was at work on at present, and by degrees might undertake some herself should she feel disposed to do so; at the worst it was always good practice. From thus dilating upon Fitz-Montagu Biggs as a patron I was led to dilate upon Fitz-Montagu Biggs generally, indeed that worthy man, with his colossal self-satisfaction, his stupendous ignorance upon all things relating to art, and still more stupendous belief in his

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own omniscience upon the subject, offers a sufficiently expansive target for such light slings and arrows, and, with the help of a few discriminative touches here and there, I had no difficulty in enticing a good many smiles from Miss Bonson at his expense. . All at once—I can not even now recall what I said, or how it all came about—but I made some slighting, or what she took to be slighting allusion to Hargrave, *à propos* of millionaires in general, and of Fitz-Montagu Biggs in particular. Miss Bonson said nothing, but her smile vanished as a light vanishes when you put an extinguisher over it. She shot one lightning-like glance of surprise and indignation in my direction, and immediately afterward betook herself with renewed diligence to the piece of background which she happened to be at that moment engaged in shading.

I remained standing beside her, feeling that I had somehow blundered, yet not knowing very clearly in what my offense consisted. No direct reproach having been addressed to me, I had no opportunity of setting myself

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right; at the same time to feel one's self thus silently tried and condemned was distinctly the reverse of comfortable, so, having waited a few minutes in hopes of inducing her to say something, I thought it was best to go straight on with my previous remark as though nothing had occurred.

"Not, you will understand me, that there is any comparison between them," I continued, in as indifferent a tone as I could muster, stooping down as I did so to pick up a small piece of charcoal which had escaped on to the ground. "Fitz-Montagu Biggs is as worthy an old fellow as breathes, but, between ourselves, a vulgarian of the first water, whereas Hargrave every one knows to be diametrically the reverse of *that*. In fact, I should never have dreamed of comparing them but for the accident of their both being what are called millionaires, and munificent ones too. Indeed, to be perfectly candid," I continued, replacing the piece of charcoal carefully upon the ledge beside her, "to be perfectly candid, I am not sure that, in this respect, old Biggs may not even be said to carry away the palm."

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Miss Bonson continued shading as if her whole heart and soul were concentrated upon seeing how far the squares and diamonds she was then cross-hatching could be made to fit neatly into one another. I waited, wondering whether she ever intended to speak again, wondering what I had better say next, whether I had better go away, whether I had offended her past redemption—what, in short, the whole thing meant. At last she looked up.

"I should never have expected to hear you depreciate Mr. Hargrave's generosity," she said reproachfully, and there was, I thought, though a slight, still a very unmistakable emphasis upon the pronoun.

I felt remarkably uncomfortable. Had any one been telling her of various little things—pure trifles for the most part—that Hargrave had done for me, or was this only a chance shot upon her part? Of all odious offenses to be suspected of backbiting a benefactor is to a generous mind the most odious possible, one which no man with a scintillation of self-respect but feels bound to resent, and I considered therefore that it was incumbent upon

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me to let her at once see that I was annoyed, and, moreover, surprised at such a very unjustifiable and uncalled-for insinuation upon her part.

"That is not fair, Miss Bonson!" I said firmly, "upon my word it is not. You misunderstand me, indeed you do. Because I say that Fitz-Montagu Biggs is as generous as he is vulgar, as liberal with his money as he is with those superfluous *h's* of his, surely that is quite a different thing from depreciating Hargrave, whom every body knows to be in all essential respects a perfectly generous man?"

"He is more, much more than that. He is the most generous man in the whole world!" she answered vehemently. "No one could possibly be *more* generous!"

Here was a nice dilemma! Here was I, Hargrave's cousin, and a man to a certain extent under obligations to him, put into the position of a person who had deliberately assailed him; she, Miss Bonson, into that of one who found it necessary to defend him against unjust aspersions, and all, as far as I could see, about nothing at all! Another and a still more self-

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evident proposition forced itself prominently upon my notice. If this were really that young lady's candid, unbiased, and final opinion of him, why, in the name of sense and reason, had she not given a more practical proof of it when a practical proof was called for?

"Most people, I imagine, could be generous upon seventy thousand a year," I retorted coldly.

The moment I had given utterance to that unlucky generalization I felt that I had put myself hopelessly in the wrong by it. Miss Bonson said nothing, but she sent a second lightning-like shaft of indignation in my direction, winged, too, this time with what I could not help clearly perceiving to be an unmistakable touch of scorn; after which she resumed her occupation as though no such person as myself continued in existence.

I again waited, hoping that she would recover her temper, and that I might then find an opportunity of modifying what I now felt to be the, to some extent, crudity of my last remark. Not a word further, however, did she

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articulate, and, after the ill-success of my last venture, I did not see my way to reopening the discussion unassisted. Having, therefore, tendered some observation upon things in general, and finding that it was allowed to drop plumb-like into the silence, I thought that it might be as well to allow an interval for calmer and more judicious reflection, and accordingly betook myself with some dignity to the Print-room. I had not been there long, however, before it struck me that in thus surrendering the field I had simply allowed myself to be put in the wrong, and that the longer I remained away, the harder moreover it would be for me to reopen the discussion. Thrusting the work I was engaged upon aside, I returned, therefore, in all haste to the sculpture-gallery. She was already gone, however, and I have not seen her since!

November 25. — "I have not seen her since!" A week since my last entry, and now a whole fortnight has passed without our meeting! Can it be that this one, possibly injudicious, but after all really very harmlessly meant observation of mine can have had the

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effect of driving her away—causing her to give up her own previously formed habits and pursuits rather than risk encountering me? The idea is too preposterous, too painful, too, I will even allow myself to admit, heartbreaking to be entertained for an instant—as preposterous, in fact, as the whole trumpery little squabble itself. Preposterous, however, as it is, the fact appears to be so. In vain I have daily perambulated these galleries; in vain spent hours sauntering along Ebury Street, trying to persuade myself that I was merely taking an afternoon stroll; in vain of set purpose and for long intervals together exposed myself to the noxious vapors and more than Tartarean horrors of the underground railway —in vain. She remains, and seems likely to remain impenetrably invisible, and as the days pass on, and I near nothing, and no ray of light comes to visit my perplexities, I begin rapidly to despair.

November 30. — This morning, to my intense joy and relief, she was standing in her old place as I walked in, and received me much as usual, though with a tinge of distance

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in her manner which there had not been previously. She had been staying for the last ten days, she told me, with a friend—a lady whose acquaintance she had made at Algiers—this, of course, had hindered her from coming to the Museum. How far I was relieved to find that displeasure against me had not been the cause of her abstention, or mortified to find that I had after all filled such a much smaller space in her mind than I had latterly taught myself to believe, I should find some difficulty in defining. Do what I would too, I found it impossible to regain my former footing, or break down that slight but highly efficient barrier which she had chosen to set up between us. She would not permit me to touch her drawing either, saying smilingly but decidedly that she must really learn henceforth to bear her own artistic burden without depending upon any extraneous charity. Having no excuse, therefore, for lingering, I was obliged to retire to the Print-room, where I sat pretending to do my own work, in reality eating my heart out with a vague sensation of mingled wrath, love, impotence, wretchedness; the dull, sleepy thud

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of the outside world coming in from time to time through the walls, and seeming to form a sort of chorus and accompaniment to all this inward tumult.

December 10.—An event—the very last that any reasonable person could possibly have anticipated—has occurred, one too which proves —were proof needed—what depths of dissimulation, what untold capacities for guile and falsity lurk in the breast of every woman, even the most apparently simple and straightforward. Having so far kept a record of my experiences, I may as well add this also, setting down as calmly and dispassionately as I can what exactly did happen on this last and most disastrous day of our renewed intercourse.

We had met as usual at the sculpture-gallery, where I found an opportunity of lingering longer than I have been allowed to do lately, so that I began to cherish a hope that our former friendly relations were once more renewing themselves. When dusk came, too, and we had to leave, the woman in bombazine had failed to put in an appearance, and accordingly we left the Museum together. As we

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passed down the steps and out of the gate I suspected that a struggle was going on in my companion's mind and that she was debating whether or not to take a cab, and thus dispense with my escort. She had her return ticket, however, as I had seen when she went to claim her umbrella, so prudential motives prevailed, and we started to walk together to the station.

It was not raining, but the usual winter gloom hung low. Every thing—the people, the houses, the half-dozen trees, the sky, entangled apparently in the topmost twigs of the latter—appeared clad in the prescribed soot-colored livery of a London December day. We were crossing the corner of Bedford Square, the long, unlovely length of Gower Street, more like a smoke-filled funnel than a street, stretching before us, when all at once the loud banging of a door, nearly upon a level with our heads, caused us both to start and give a momentary glance upward.

At the door of one of the larger houses we were just then passing stood John Hargrave, having evidently just issued from the house, and being upon the point of descending the

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steps. Involuntarily I glanced at Miss Bonson, and could see that a color had sprung to her cheeks. At the same instant Hargrave himself caught sight of us.

"Why, Dol," he exclaimed, "this is a bit of luck! Do you know I was——"

The sentence never got any further, for his eyes had by this time traveled to my companion, and with a start he had hurried down the steps, and was shaking hands with her, and having ascertained our destination and declared it to be also his own, the next minute saw us all three proceeding side by side down Gower Street.

How far the others did or did not share the feeling I can not say, but I am bound to own that I felt, not merely annoyed, but embarrassed by this most unexpected encounter. For the life of me too I could not shake off a ridiculous feeling of having somehow or other behaved badly toward Hargrave, and that moreover Miss Bonson knew it and was at that moment thinking of it.—"Most people, I imagine, could be generous upon seventy thousand a year!"—That unluckily-worded sentiment of my own seemed, imp-like, to dance before

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my eyes, and take a malicious pleasure in repeating itself over and over in my ears.

It must have been, I think, that I was hungry, having again gone too long that day without luncheon; at least, that is the only way in which I can account for the idiotic fashion in which this idea seemed to take possession of me, rendering me utterly incapable of taking any part in the conversation. Miss Bonson, too, scarcely spoke, Hargrave, upon the other hand, rattling on with unusual volubility. He had only arrived in London, he told us, the day before; he had been yachting most of the summer, and had taken a run then to America and Canada, from which he had only just got back. There were not many foot-passengers, still the pavement was too narrow for three to walk abreast with comfort; accordingly I fell back, and allowed the other two to keep ahead of me.

Most people whose business brings them to the unlovely locality, have probably at one time or other found Gower Street long; but I doubt whether any body ever before found it so long as I did upon that fatal afternoon. Ever

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so far ahead of us I could see the open space where the London University and the Hospital stand, and where a chain has been stretched across the street; but though we walked at a tolerably quick pace, it seemed to me as if for ages we never got one single inch nearer to it. At last it was passed, and we had arrived at that grimiest of all grimy stations which yawns for the passengers of the District Railway. The staircase, by which its subterranean horrors are attained, is as steep as a ladder, and as black as the approaches to Erebus, and Hargrave, who was still ahead, offered Miss Bonson his hand to help her to descend. Having unfortunately walked into the Museum that morning, I had to stop and get a ticket, while the others passed on to the platform, and by the time I reached it the train also had arrived, and every one was scrambling into carriages. I followed hastily, but a crowd of idiotic women, rushing one against another, blocked my path, and by the time I reached the compartment in which the other two had taken their places, it was already crammed to overflowing. I suppose I looked blank, for Miss

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Bonson murmured something apologetic. There was nothing to be done, however, and not a moment to lose; I must either get in somewhere else, or consent to be left behind. Accordingly I scrambled into a compartment a little further down, the train being then already in motion.

By this time I felt—as any man would, I think, have felt under the circumstances! I was thoroughly disgusted with Hargrave, displeasure having entirely taken the place of those other, and very unreasonable feelings I have been describing. What diabolical fate had brought the man back at that most inopportune moment, I thought indignantly: worse still, had sent him to Bedford Square of all places in the world, and upon that particular afternoon of all afternoons in the year? Why had I been such a fool, too, as to let him push himself in and take command of the situation in that masterly fashion of his? Was it he or was it I that was acting as Miss Bonson's escort? Was it he or was it I that had been her companion at the Museum? Surely he had had ample opportunities of ingratiating

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himself in Algiers, and how had he succeeded *there?* Had she not gone out of her way to show him as plainly as any woman ever showed any man that she was not to be wooed by him? Ought there not to come *some* point when a man ceases to importune a woman, and accepts his dismissal, if not in good part, at all events as inevitable? I was vexed too with myself, feeling that I had been acting the part of an idiot. Probably Miss Bonson had looked to me for support, feeling that I stood temporarily in the place of her guardian, and how had I acted? I had simply stood aside and had allowed Hargrave to step in, and now with that absence of tact which was one of his primary characteristics, he was probably seizing the opportunity to torment the poor girl afresh with his importunities. Well, there was no help for it now, I felt; but the instant we reached our station, I would no longer permit myself to be set aside, and would refuse to leave Miss Bonson until I had seen her safely at her aunt's door, and between us we could probably make it evident to Hargrave that his society might be dispensed with.

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By this time we had nearly completed that gigantic circuit which all who travel by this branch of our metropolitan system enjoy, and were nearing the Sloane Square station. Before alighting it struck me that it would be as well to make perfectly sure that the others did get out there, as were I to alight and then find out too late that they had gone on to Victoria, the case would be worse than ever. So, in point of fact, it seemed; although the platform was soon crowded, among the very unattractive-looking throng which began clustering toward what by comparison may be called the open air, I failed to discover any one at all resembling Miss Bonson. Congratulating myself upon my forethought, I had just settled back into my seat, and the train had just got into motion, when I caught sight of two figures rather behind the rest, which were at that moment ascending the stairs side by side—more indeed than side by side, for they were actually arm-in-arm; nor did it require a second glance to discern that they were no other than those of that young lady herself and my cousin Hargrave!

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For an instant a wild idea of then and there precipitating myself from the train crossed my mind. Before there was time to carry it into execution, however, it chanced that she turned round in order to make some remark to her companion. Her veil was now pushed back, and as she did so a sudden smile—rapid, subtle, tell-tale—flitted momentarily over her face!

Has it ever, I wonder, happened to a man to go on all his life acting upon some fixed idea—one which colored every thought, and lent its own hues to every thing he said, or did, or heard? and has it also happened to him suddenly to perceive that this same fixed idea of his—the one upon which all the rest hung—had been from the very beginning of things based upon a fallacy? If such a man ever existed, and if such a revelation ever came to him, his feelings must, I think, have been not at all unlike what mine were at that instant.

How I reached home, and what precisely I have been doing or saying since, I should find it remarkably difficult to give any coherent

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account of. I conclude that I have not behaved very differently from usual, since no one has called my attention to the fact, but beyond that my consciousness upon the subject remains a blank. Go where I will I am haunted, pursued, irritated by an endless succession of ideas, each more exasperating and inconsequent than the last. All the scenes and the persons of the last few days, and all the scenes and persons of last spring in Algiers seem to rise and dance confusedly together before my eyes. Hickle-bury and Fitz-Montagu Biggs, Tummins and the woman in bombazine, the Château d'Oc, the tadpoles in the tank, the statues in the Museum, all seem swarming and buzzing like a crowd of infuriated bees whose hive has got overturned. Could I have been mistaken from the very beginning? Could she have cared for him always, *always*, and only been hindered from showing it because, as he said himself, of his money, because of Mrs. Bonson's impor-tunities, because of the apparent necessity which her own poverty created for her? Could all that seeming indifference, nay, dislike, have been nothing all the while but a blind—a more

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or less intentional throwing of dust in other men's eyes!

Things of which then I took no need—trifles hardly worth repeating or dwelling upon—keep now recurring over and over to my mind. That second time we met—the day we lunched at the old palm fancier's, I have forgotten his name, and walked together afterward in the garden, I remember that I observed—*à propos* of a resplendent Oriental apparition in white and crimson—what poor insignificant creatures the other men looked beside him. "Not Mr. Hargrave!" she exclaimed abruptly, as if the idea were too unpalatable to be entertained even for an instant. Other trifles, equally slight but equally significant, keep recurring now to my mind, fitting together like the long dissociated pieces of a puzzle. Well, the pieces of the puzzle are together now; every thing is done, fixed, settled, and no doubt they have talked every thing over by this time, no doubt they have thoroughly compared notes with one another, and that my part of the drama has come pretty exhaustively under review! No doubt she has told him all about

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our quarrel the other day! What woman, indeed, that ever was born could resist such an opportunity of extolling herself at another person's expense? They are engaged, that I know for certain, for I met that delightful little brother of hers yesterday in the street, and before I could escape he shouted out the information to me across half a dozen other people. Hargrave is to be congratulated certainly upon his future relations! Indeed, if half Simcox's report of them is true it will be—millionaire as he is—as much as he can do to satisfy their rapacity. Well, all that is happily nothing, and less than nothing to me. After what has taken place our meetings are not likely to be very frequent in the future; indeed, it is evident to me that they are to the full as eager to avoid me as I can possibly be to avoid them. John, I begin now clearly to perceive, has always secretly disliked me, and is therefore in all probability only rejoicing to find his antipathy, as he will of course say, justified.

16*th December.*—At last a letter, or rather a few lines. I tear it open and read as follows:—

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"DEAR DOL,

"I am the happiest man in England! You who were with me in Algiers will not need, I imagine, to be told why! Anyhow, mind I count upon you to be my best man, so don't disappoint

"Your affectionate cousin,

"JOHN HARGRAVE.

"P.S.—By the way, what became of you the other day at the Underground Railway?"

THE END.

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